

The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 12.45



Then he hit me, and that's all I remember. I remember blacking out and waking up in the hospital with stitches on my temple. That was the last time I saw my dad.

read the rest of Niko's POW on page 5

It's one of those weeks and The Beat needs all hands on deck, so this week we have to go to the well and ask our old friend and colleague, Allan Tinker to step up to the plate and share his thoughts with you 12.45 editorial note readers. Before we get to Allan allow this editor to inform you of the topics discussed in this issue.

The first topic, "Loss Of Innocence" - How fast we grow up. Seems like yesterday we as young children had not a worry in the world - we went to school, we played with our friends, watched TV, did our homework, ate and went to sleep at a reasonable time, all to do the same thing most likely the following day. Today our lives are much more complicated. How did our lives get so challenging? Now we have to worry about getting jumped, getting shot at, death, avoiding or using drugs and alcohol, getting back into school, finding a home, getting arrested, going to court, incarceration, learning how to become responsible and changing our lives for the better, or so that may be the plan. This week we want to read about how you interpret your life and how this young life of yours turned for the worse. When did your life get so complicated? What was the turning point? Describe for us how you turned from having no problems, to carrying many problems, to losing that innocent child like life once upon a time.

Second topic, "Worse Off Than You..." - We've all been through our share of hardships and pain, but do you think that there is someone out there who has it worse off than you? Being locked up is a very challenging thing to go through, but do you think that there may be something more challenging? If so, write a story about someone you know who has it worse off than you, without listing any names. Or if you want to take it further write about a whole group of people that may have it worse off than you... Please be Beat appropriate...

Third and final topic, "Lecturer" - As young people we forever have to put up with getting lectured by a so-called caring adult - family, pastor, counselor, teacher, neighbor, boss, coach - who knows all. As young people we know a great lecturer from a bad one, even when we don't want to hear the good ones because we are in denial of what we must do or say. This week we want you to write about that lecturer and what he/she means to you. For better or for worse "lecture" us about that lecturer that has struck a nerve in you to look at your life differently.

Knowing the topics, now allow us to hand over the reigns to Allan and his loving wisdom...

Last week someone broke the window of my station wagon and stole my backpack, maybe thinking it had a laptop or GPS in it - but all it had was twenty-five Beats, twelve pads of paper, eighty pencils and fifty pencil-top erasers. So that car went to the shop and when it came out the other went in (hit-and-run damage when parked on the street). The home telephone stopped working altogether. The water container in the basement sprang a leak and because it had a rubber bladder inside its steel casing, had to be replaced instead of repaired. One dog got sick and the other pissed in the house, twice. The cable repairman called at 11:30 AM but then failed to show up all day. So, today, the only hassle left from a trivial storm of irritating trouble last week, was the cable repairman coming between 1 and 3 PM.

He was a young black man with long dreads and a winning smile. Of course, there were unexpected problems and the time stretched out before us like a desert of frustration, but it gave us time to talk. Turns out we both grew up in Oakland, though I'm ten years older than his mother who went to the same high school I did, (O-High) ten years later me. Marlin, that was his name, went to Castlemont, grew up around Sobrante Park and then moved out to Brookfield (both neighborhoods in East Oakland for those who don't know). Now he works for Comcast and is making very good money for a twenty-two year old. In fact, when his mother, who still does his laundry for him, found a pay stub in his pants pocket, she discovered that he earned more than she did, despite all that overtime she pulled. So she asked him to help out the household with a monthly contribution. He was happy to oblige, though he warned me when I told him how my son earns more than I ever did and lives in a house I provide him rent free, that grown children will take a free ride as long as they can get it.

When I asked him who or what was responsible for his staying out of the street life, at first he didn't understand my question. Then he said, "My momma and my grandma, for sure. But my younger brother out of all of us was the closest to that life, had a little clique when he was sixteen, until the day he

got shot. There was a shootout by the liquor store one day, and he got hit in the arm by a sawed-off AK. But man, there must be a God, because the same bullet that hit him in the arm spun him around, and the second bullet that would have hit him square in the chest instead, because the force of the first hitting his outstretched arm had spun him sideways - just grazed across the front of his chest. Man, there is a God! My brother's arm swoll up like Popeye after that, and momma moved us out of Oakland the next day, leaving Grandma's house and taking the only apartment in Concord she could find in one day. We all whined about how small it was, but she said that she would not let any of her children live another day on the streets of East Oakland because she did not want to see any of her children die on the streets of East Oakland. Well, my younger brother left that street life behind. He didn't keep going back to post up on the block like so many do. Nah, after that day he got shot, he changed, and now he's married with a nine-month old daughter."

When Marlin and I parted company, I still didn't have the new T-Vo Comcast box my wife wanted because our house is right on the line between Oakland and Berkeley, and Marlin only had Berkeley boxes while our house would only take an Oakland box. But when he finally did leave, he had an armful of Beats, and the top one had a note to his younger brother inviting him to call us if he was interested in a job with The Beat. Marlin kept saying he'd be perfect for it because he really knew what the life that leads to juvenile hall is all about. "You know they say a job won't come looking for you, you've got to go looking for a job. But it's like he had his job training in the street. I know he'll be calling you," Marlin shouted over his shoulder as he headed off to the Comcast van with two ladders on the roof. "No worries," I called back. "Whether he calls or not, I hope you both enjoy reading The Beat."

Even though it kept crossing my mind, somehow I couldn't bring myself to tell him the story of Allen Bow, RIP, nor that of his older brother Will Roy who was not fortunate enough to share a tale of God's grace, bullets that miss their target. I know this though: God doesn't pull the trigger. God asks us to rise taller and bigger, even when the devil's way seems better and quicker. Nah, blood is thick but love is thicker. This note is dedicated to Will Roy whose fraternal pain will remain an open wound forever. Join us in praying he'll find God's grace in his hurting heart and continue to save the next man's brother from the same fate Allen met. Man, if you know Will, you know where he's been and where he got to, and what all he does at/ for The Beat and its readers and writers week in and week out. If you don't know Will Roy, take my word for it, he's walked the long road out of the crazy street life and out of the doors of incarceration that come with it. Sanity is making mistakes we refuse to continue to repeat even when our hearts bleed like the waters of the Red Sea. Pharoah's armies drowned because what goes around comes around. We all end up six feet deep but some move to higher ground while still here on earth, and even if we die tomorrow we'll show the devil what an imperfect life is worth (cause ain't nobody perfect in this scandalous world).

To the atheist who reads these words, metaphors have been known to cure depression. Let's not quibble over syllables of sound, but join together to turn this terrible, suffering, cold old world around: choose the heart's affection whether it's divine or just the human mind changing direction. When one man on earth loses a brother to the gun, even angels lose faith and turn away from heaven's bright sun that scorches the wings of each and every one like the burning flames of hell. When a man on earth loses his brother to a gun, neither atheist nor angel can tell the story of his pain, for it stretches from the scorching flames of heaven's pitiless sun to the icy, vengeful pits of hell where all evil deeds are conceived and done. For a moment heaven and hell seem to be one, when fire and ice take the shape of a gun. But this moment will pass like the sound of a shot, for the angels scorched wings are all that we've got to raise our spirits up out of hell. RIP Allen, you were loved well. And Will, only time will tell whether your undying love will lift you to visions of heaven where Allen now dwells or trap you in hallucinatory hell. Don't let your pain gun down your tortured brain. We know you can maintain even in a world that's straight insane. Everyone at The Beat feels a piece of your grief, but our readers and writers still need to believe in life after death: heaven on earth is just doing your best (to represent love through hell's hardest test). May Allen rest in peace. To Allen and Will we dedicate this issue of The Beat.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Live Again

Hear their voices, feel free
 Talking, laughing, being me
 I'm living again when I talk to them
 Remember the breeze I forgot,
 No longer in reality; I live again
 The fun that dwells in my thoughts
 Close my eyes to live what I can't
 Look up to the sky to smell the freedom as I stand
 Exercise to forget my loss
 Look out the window, see the street
 Walk around to forget my thoughts
 Yearning to find what I seek
 No longer look out the window
 So my heart won't be brittle
 Hear the phone ring
 Walk over to hear the lost voices
 In memory I relive
 Wishing I had other choices
 Forgot my morals, lived in sin
 Broken promises, but please let me live
 Surrounded by white bricks
 A room paved to isolate
 Paying for my sins
 How much longer will it take?
 Thoughts of living again comes to mind
 Soon enough my life shall shine
 But sad it is, it takes another long time
 Bid me not to despond
 Bid me not despair nor dismal, but to fond
 Bid me not to mourn
 But to forget
 To start anew, hating and loving it all the more
 Allow me to live again.

-Lil' Roach, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't know "how much longer will it take," but we do know that if the result is a new way of living that allows you to love life without giving up your freedom, then however long it takes will be worth it. It seems to us that you have already made the hardest part of the journey and traveled the greatest distance by making a mental leap. Perhaps it is the leap from childhood to adulthood, but if you are able to correct the mistakes you lay out with such honesty here ("Forgot my morals, lived in sin..."), you will be building a firm foundation on which to build a decent life. Maybe somewhere down the road, when you are working the job you want to do and loving the family you want to have, you'll be able to cast an adult's eye back to earlier times and write the story of your life.

Perspective

Even though I'm in juvenile hall, and had my freedom taken away from me, it humbles me to think of those who have it worse than I do. Even in jail, I am guaranteed three meals a day, while children all over the world are lucky if they receive three meals a week. Those children are "free" because they're not in here, but they are in their own cage because their life is ticking away and running out of opportunities.

Some kids commit crimes because they think jail is a safer place for them, instead of their regular life. At first I thought, "I think they're crazy," because I would do almost anything to be rid of this place. But then I stop and think about how bad some people have it, and it makes me a better person getting a small glimpse of their situation.

-Friend of Him, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Not everyone can find the kind of empathy you write about (or concern for anyone outside their immediate circle), and even fewer can express it as well as you have here. It's tragic to think that some children —our children — find jail safer than "freedom." That knowledge humbles us.

Worse Off Than Me

Yes, I think there are lots of people who got it a lot worse than me. One person I know that got it worse than me, is ____ who was apart of a group of people who went around robbing and killing people for no reason and was getting ideas of taking it further and further from a video game. I think he got it worse then me because he is in a maximum-security prison for the rest of his life.

Another person or should I say people that got it worse then me are the people in Africa who don't have families, homes, are money so they are hungry with nothing to eat and hardly anyone who care.

I would say that's the worse it could get but there are people who even got it worse then them. The people form Iraq who stay in the Bay Area with no home. They get beat up for no reason, they get looked at very differently because they so happen to be the same race as Osama Bin Laden, they also get treated different nationally and I think that's as worse as it gets.

-Dante, Alameda

From The Beat: Your eyes don't miss much, do you? It's especially sad to hear about the Iraqis getting treated badly here - because the Iraqis had to suffer under Saddam Hussein, and then they had to suffer all the violence that came from the war. But they are innocent. And Osama Bin Laden is Saudi, not Iraqi. It's like our own ignorance makes us hurt other people. Thanks for being a teacher on this!

Began At Ten

When I was little, around ten or under, I was still a kid. Drugs were all around me: my mom, my cousins, older friends (I didn't have friends my age when I was younger) but [for me] it was all about Ninja Turtles, Power Rangers and Beast Wars. But then I started paying attention to what others did and I wanted more things.

As I got older, I got in trouble more and I started getting kicked out of the house (it started when I was 10). When I would leave, I would take my belongings with me and I'd lose 'em or stash 'em, and I'd come back and they would be gone. I needed a way to get things I wanted and needed, so I started hustling.

First off, it was petty stuff like panhandling and looking for fallen change and stuff, but as I started smoking more weed, I started selling it, too. It turned into a daily thing and before I knew it I was also selling bottles, pills, a lil' bit of coke, bootlegs, stolen property, anything I could get my hands on. I would even steal, rob and burglarize houses.

Then I started living on my own, which was the major turning point because I had to fend for myself at all times, literally living on the streets. I've lived in abandoned houses, friends' houses, in fields, on school roofs, in irrigation tunnels, and one time in a friend's van. I had to buy my own clothes, get my own food, make sure I wasn't cold at night or I wasn't gonna get jacked when I left my stuff somewhere.

When you live like that, you have to grow up faster then everybody else, so it sets you apart from others.

A lot of people can't relate to how it was for me, but sadly some can. Or it's worse for them. But I feel I'm prepared for life now more than others c'ause I know what it's like out there in reality.

-Spiderman, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, thank you for sharing this detailed description of what it was like for you to be homeless, and how you got there. What is your current living situation? Since you know how cold and hard the streets can be, have you changed your ways in terms of doing dirt? Is there a person (either a friend or in your extended family) you can turn to for support and for help in making a fresh start?

Loss Of Innocence

Come to think of this, I really still wish I had my childhood. Remembering back then, I used to watch cartoon shows, going to the movies with my friends, racing each other with scooters and playing a lot of video games. We used to hang out doing kid stuff, which was really fun.

Now I hang out with my friends, but we're up to no good. We're mostly out there doing either something that's illegal or negative. Sometimes we find it funny to do those types of things and... come to think of it, how did I go from a fun, peaceful childhood to what I am today?

A lot of crimes being committed today, has to do with the people around you. No discipline and no motivation coming from our parents. They gave up on us, compared to back then where we had rules to listen to. Now we don't listen because our parents can't control us. So everyone's out there doing whatever they want, mostly being influenced to do bad.

I started losing my childhood when I was in middle school. Never going to school, arguing with my mom, disobeying everything. And when I was in high school started doing bad. Hanging out with the wrong people. My mom tries to lecture me and get me to do good, but I tell her to shut up.

I regret most of this today, but there's still a long way for me to change. I might go back to what I was doing when I was a child. When I get out because I'm tired of this life I'm living.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's clear that you've spent some time thinking about your community and yourself, and you've made some important judgments. How will the things you regret doing shape the things you plan to be doing in the future? Can you use those experiences you now regret as a teacher for the youngsters coming up, so that they don't have to go through this experience to learn what you know?

Fact Of Life To Remember

I would like to leave y'all with something positive to think about since there's too many failures in life. Sometimes when I'm on the outs, I sort of feel like I'm standing alone, and all around me are different tunnels. They're dark and unrevealing, but at the end of one, there is a light. I'm so alone and confused, I know this tunnel must be the one, it must be right.

Halfway through, the light disappears, and just as in life, there are obstacles to face and decisions to make. When that light goes out, I just want to get back to where I started so I can try again, try another tunnel to find my way. I know if my mind ain't right and I don't do right and make good decisions based on values, principles, morals, no matter what or who that obstacle is, if I don't make the right decision and do the right things, it will be a struggle, hard to survive, hard to live.

Sure enough, there is another tunnel all lit up. So I'll try this tunnel, 'cause I got to get somewhere, trying to get to where I got to be in this world. Maybe the light will go out, maybe it won't, but if it does, must get back, get my mind right, and start again. I will not lose. I will find that path for myself and I will reach the end of the tunnel, because I am the light!

-M-Goon, San Francisco

From The Beat: We love the fact that you are determined to find your path — your tunnel — no matter how many times you go down the wrong one! That is a positive message, and we appreciate it. (We can easily imagine a computer game based on this concept.) Do any of those tunnels have the word "Education" over them? If so, we urge you to try that one because we are certain there is light at the end of that tunnel.

I Am Worth More Than These Nasty Foul Things

I ate. I got clothes and all that. But I don't know how to explain it, it was sad. He was drinking a lot and every time he drink he would beat me up. He would be rude and disrespectful.

He would beat me up and couldn't explain why he did it, and then every time I gained the courage to leave, he would say baby please! Baby please! Baby please don't leave me.

I believe he cared about me, but his drinking always got in the way of any possible emotion of affection he might have shown if a drink wasn't always in his hand. He would take me far as I couldn't back to my home. His only concern was me making money. He would cuss me out, but I am worth more than those nasty foul things you said about me.

-Rayleand, Alameda

From The Beat: Whatever he might have thought he felt — Love doesn't beat. Love doesn't pimp. Love doesn't use. Love doesn't treat loved ones with cruelty. We are so sorry you had to go through this pain, and so glad that you are away from him now — and especially to hear those three magic words "I am worth more." Because you are.

What Haunts Me

A memory that will probably haunt me for the rest of my life is this: I was five years old and my father abused my mother, like crazy. One day I was sitting in my grandmother's living room and my mom comes out of the bedroom screaming at my dad. And she says: "Miho, we're leaving," and I said: "Ok mom." And that's when I saw it. He slapped my mom. It keeps playing back and forth in my head, as if someone were rewinding it. Then he hit me, and that's all I remember. I remember blacking out and waking up in the hospital with stitches in my temple. That was the last time I saw my dad.

-Niko, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Those are terrible memories. While there is no excuse for your father's violent behavior, we do hope that one day he will ask for your forgiveness, and for your mom's. You have a large responsibility. You have experienced violence. You know it is wrong. You must learn to avoid situations that breed it. We hope your mom has a better life now, and we are concerned about you. What are you doing to make your life better than your dad's?

Age Eight

Many people say you're born with innocence, but I was born into a screwed up life. Moms and pops always fighting, jumping from house to house. Grandmother died, great-grandmother died, family tryin' to use me for an SSI check.

The whole time I didn't know what was going on. Nobody paid me no mind. People came over and looked at me funny 'cause I had ADD and other disorders that I had no control over. People talking about me all the time, thinking I don't know what they was talking about. How does an adult make fun of a kid? They didn't try to help me! They just made comments.

When I reached the age of eight, I became just like my father, smokin' and makin' money. I was the first third-grader to get kicked out of school for selling weed! That's where it began!

-Toni Toni Toni, Alameda

From The Beat: Reading about your loss of innocence breaks our hearts. It is deeply wrong for an adult to make fun of a kid. As painful as it must be to look back on these memories, we hope that the realizations you are having will help you find the strength to look out for yourself and seek another path. You are young, and your life is your own. Don't let selling drugs or the system take away your chances at a life of freedom and the opportunity to earn respect on your own terms.

Freedom

Please wake me when I am free
 I can't bear captivity
 Can't stand an impossible breeze
 Freedom is the oxygen I breathe
 Years of dismal failure
 Freedom shall soon gesture
 Been missing it for years
 Never enjoyed it; wishing it was near
 Normal lives go on
 While mine is stuck in the wrong
 Beautiful the horizon is to behold
 But not of you are in complete woe
 Walk the walk you want
 Can't if the freedom with you stops
 In your face its start to mock
 Forever in your mind it will haunt
 Please wake me when I'm free
 I can't bear captivity
 My heart wanting so much
 To feel the freedom's touch
 Taken away once more
 Wishing to be reborn
 Striving to succeed
 When will I be feed?
 Freedom is worth more than anymore thinks
 For it, ask me how much I will give
 Lost it once, lost it twice, lost it four, lost it a fifth
 Now a sixth; how much more of it shall I give?
 Ravenous to my release
 The time I have is like a big tease
 I shall stand on freedoms long line
 Waiting on the time
 To come to the day that I revive

-Lil' Roach, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a powerful prayer for freedom, but it's also a sad admission of the difficulties you're having staying free. Six times losing it to the system says clearly that what you're doing isn't working for you. The overwhelming desire to be free when you're locked up is understandable, but what can you do to keep that desire burning inside you when you are free and able to make your own choices? It is in those choices that your future freedom (or slavery) lies. Six times you've made the kind of choices that leave you imprisoned and desperate for the oxygen of freedom. What will you do (or stop doing) this time that will prevent you from coming here a seventh time?

The Rest Of Her Life

A have a friend who was killed. Well, I have two friends who got killed. They were brothers. One of them died in April and the other died in May. Their mother had a lot to go through with paying the bills and trying to keep her kids outta trouble, but she couldn't do it.

Now I think she really have a lot to go through because both of her sons were killed dang near the same time. And she also has four more kids to take care of and bills to pay.

My mother used to give her little girls clothes because they didn't have money to buy a lot of new clothes.

When I see their little brother, he's only five or six, I give him money because they don't have a lot, so I try to help out. So that's the person who I think has got it worse than me. I also feel bad about the whole situation and what she has to go through every day for the rest of her life, knowing that her sons were murdered.

-Barbosa, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a tragedy and heartbreak for this mother, whose life is so hard already. When the brothers were murdered, did you feel mad at them for getting into trouble? Did it change the way you feel about your hood, yourself, or your own family? If you could turn back the clock to March, would you warn your friends? What would you say to them?

Haunting Memory

A memory that still haunts me is the last day of my mother's life. She had breast cancer in 2001, but recovered after 6 months. Then in 2004 the cancer returned. It had expanded into her bloodstream and was now into her lungs and liver. She fought it for a year and a half and towards the end spent many days in the hospital, even weeks at a time.

One week in November of 2005 she came home on a Friday night. I didn't know, but the hospital had released her to spend the last few hours of her life at home. I was excited to see her until I realized she was unconscious and could not even acknowledge my presence. The cancer had spread drastically and she had developed a tumor in her throat. The most horrible part of the memory was the noise she made. The tumor was blocking her air passages and eventually suffocated her.

I will always hear that horrible gargling sound. I cried myself to sleep that night. My uncle woke me up very early in the morning to tell me that my mother had passed away. RIP Genet Haile - 11/12/05.

-S, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is the saddest of stories, beautifully and simply told.

Loss Of Innocence

What it do wit' da Beat? It's ya boy Gully Bub, an' dis topic caught ma attention. It seems like yesterday when me an' ma enemies used to go to school together, play wit' each other, spend the night at each other's house. Now we beefin'. We can't even go to the next ninja set to see yo' family wit' out getting shot at or look at funny.

My life turn when I start hanging out on the block, messin' around wit' the homies, an' got caught up in the shhh. Once I got jump by some sucka-ass ninjas, my life turned, an' I was like, "Forget it! I'm in it!"

Ever since then I been in the shhh. That's when my childhood change.

-Gully Bub, San Francisco

From The Beat: What sets this piece apart from the usual "I love my block" writing is that first paragraph. There is a longing in your words for something different. We understand the change that circumstances forced on you, but — because you realize that your "enemies" are your childhood friends — we hope your life will change again. We know it can, but only you can know if it will. What's done is done. But the adult choices you make now will shape what is not yet done.

Past Years

In the last couple of years I know I have caused a lot of pain to my parents. I lost all of their trust and I feel like they lost their hope in me. It hurts unbelievably to look back and see how much I hurt my parents. Sometimes it's hard for me to forgive myself for letting my parents down.

The last couple years have been uncontrollable for me but I'm finally getting a grip on my life. I am truly trying my hardest to earn my parents trust back and I know it'll take a long time but eventually I'll get it.

One of my life goals is to make my parents and family proud. For my dad to be able to say "see, that's my daughter" and be proud saying it. And I truly believe in my heart that one day I will accomplish that.

And for everyone else, respect your parents and show them some love, 'cause if it wasn't for them you wouldn't be here in the first place.

-Rosita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Right you are. We have a good feeling about you. And we are sure that if you work hard, you'll get what you're looking for.

A Few Years Ago

I think the time when I lost most of my innocence was about four years ago when I was a young teen.

Well, I started smoking that Mary Jane and it progressed into me using more harder drugs which I said was never going to happen. I was slowly going down even though I was barely starting high school. Now more months went by and I started getting more into trouble and cared more about me friends then family. I was starting to lose my innocence and becoming a stubborn person hurting the ones that cared the most about me.

I practically started becoming blind to all the good things around me and I just wanted to do what I wanted, thinking nothing or no one can stop me.

My parents would try to lecture me and I wouldn't listen. Now as I'm older and turning my life around before it gets worse, I am trying to remember all my parents' lectures and learn from my mistakes. Now I listen eagerly and regretting at times that I lost some of that beautiful innocence. I know that I lost some innocence but I gained strength, courage, and hope while at it. So now I'm trying to do my best.

-Rosita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You were heading down the wrong road with all the decisions you were making. Now that you're older and wiser you can and will correct them. Just don't repeat the same mistakes. You live and you learn. You can't be worried about the past too much, but what you do in present will affect your future.



A Mirror To A Thug

I'm really getting tired of y'all little kids. I'm talking to every single last little boy in this unit, but except for the homie (you know who you are). All of y'all little boys don't do anything but run y'all mouths. Y'all call it beefin', but what it really is is just a competition on who could talk the most shhh. It's like yah breakin' up then makin' up. Y'all wanna sit at the same table and be coo' wid the ones you supposedly beefin' wid. But then when one of ya homies come in, you have to prove yourself to him; so you decide to start beefin'. And the thing that's really funny is how y'all talk to make sure staff around before you try to act sick.

I remember we was in the multi-purpose room one time, and there was the kids was from different sets that was beefin'. They sat the whole program wid no problem, then when it ended, they want to get hecca far away from each other and start muggin'. Once we start leavin' and staff get between the both of them, then they square up. They stood squared up for hecca long, and through that whole time they could've took flight. But what they was doin' was waitin' for staff to break it up. How funny huh?

Oh, and I just love how these kids wait until night or whenever they behind they door. That's when it gets real hectic. They just talk all they got for hours off the door, but when they come out, they act like nothing eva happened. And why dey always gotta lie about everything? Talking 'bout y'all have Lamborghinis and 40 inch rims. Talking 'bout you make close to a million. Come on now! Now that's just ridiculous! Think about what you sayin'. You expect anybody to believe that? If you really had close to a million, you won't be livin' in any broke down projects! You bum! And why is it that y'all neva talk about anything positive?

Every conversation I heard yah havin' is always about something so stupid that y'all find important in y'all lives. Y'all argue over who smokes the most blunts or who ever popped pills before, and if someone doesn't do it as much, y'all say they weak. Y'all dumb! Y'all proud of being slow

potheads!

Or how y'all think bustin' guns is sick. Again, if someone neva has, that makes him weak. Or if someone don't bring or ain't from anywhere, he soft or he a sucka. But y'all wrong! That's the smart one! He's the one that's finna grow up to be somebody! He finna make it in life while y'all either end up dead, in the pen, or on the streets, broke and strung out. You dope fends!

But it's whateva to y'all, though. Y'all say it's life. And when people try doin' what y'all doin' so you can live a good life, y'all wanna be smart and say, "This is all we know." No! It's all you wanna know! People are telling you there's something better than what y'all livin', but y'all don't want to hear dat. But if they were talking about guns, drugs or beef, y'all would give dem attention. Well dat's y'all life. You ain't hurtin' anybody but yourselves and y'all families. Good luck wid all that living like a bum.

I ain't gon wish you the best. Keep on tryna be like you see on TV or tryna copy one another wid the cute lil' dreads that y'all find so cool. Go and shake them lil' daddles so you can fit in with the crowd. You chumps are a whole bunch of followers, so go get killed and get your face put on a white tee that says "RIP," maybe even get your name tatted on a homie. Go rot in cell up in prison, whicheva one you want, 'cause that's all you gon get out the game. Have fun! Ha ha!

-Savioso, San Francisco

From The Beat: We usually don't give props to pieces that look at the behavior of others without also examining their own. But in this case, you're onto something very important. And, since not too long ago you were among those doing exactly what you criticize here, we thought it was worth it to highlight your strong piece with a Piece Of the Week. The only thing we feel like pointing out, Savioso, is that your and your peers are at an age and in a place where it's important to seem "big" and "bad" and "down." It takes a level of maturity that most are not yet ready to display to reach the conclusions you've reached, because we know you've applied those same conclusions to yourself. Our only advice is that you give more props to those to talk tough but don't act on it than to those who act tough and cause problems for themselves and others. And, of course, to focus on your own path to positive change. Maybe in another piece, you could write how you moved from the kind of "little boy" you are complaining about to the more responsible young man who sees the world with a clearer eye.

Perspective of the World

As we look at the world and observe what is and has happened to the world, we find out that our problem isn't so bad. With all the killings in other countries, prisoners of other nations have it worse in their prison than our prison. With the poverty in other countries, people walking getting kidnapped and tortured out of nowhere. Kids ended up missing, or grow up in fear and terror of random strangers. People are not getting what they need for saving their lives.

The world is filled with tragic events every second, minute, hour, that pass by everyday. We as people of society, just live life without a care of the outcomes of our future and everything around us. We focus on our goal of taking care of ourselves trying to survive in a world full of technology and business corporations taking over the world slowly.

Thinking only inside the box, not looking at the big picture, looking at the lives of others and the problem of others. Understanding more about what the world can offer, trying to think ahead for the future of other, to make sure the earth will stay alive for billions of years. Understanding other situations that have happened to others, then thinking that it was nothing compared to me. Having this perspective of the world will then make us more compassionate about our life and others and to be able to change the way the world is now.

-Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a very powerful piece. You have a lot of good points. We are not looking at the big picture. But you know there are some of us that are. It's just a matter of the right people being the right page at the same time. We should feel very lucky to live in a country where the jail system is way better than anywhere outside of this country. But you know not everybody is ever gonna see the perspective you're seeing either. It's not like we all can agree on the same things because we all come from different cultures and different backgrounds. But we can at least try to co-exist.

My Loss Of Innocence

I can remember me as a little girl, with my family going to school not going out, staying home. Then growing up without a worry.

Well when I got to middle school that's when things changed. I met a girl in middle school that changed it all. During my days in middle school I got picked on because I wasn't all that pretty then, and wasn't popular but that wasn't something I was worried about. I had my own problems to think about. I had divorced parents, problems with going back and forth, so when I meet my new best friend she started to introduce me to make-up, then guys, then drugs.

After drugs I went to gangs, after that I was hooked. I started to do it a lot; before I knew it I was ditching school. We stopped talking and I still went on and was with my dad and he didn't even tell me anything. He was starting to be my homie more than my dad.

I got into high school, and I started to hang out with those people to get ranked into a gang. I started partying and got hooked on alcohol.

Since then it's been hard to stop drinking, now I ended up in here and in out of this place.

I still have problems with my family and it's worse, now I know what's going on. I got all kinds of problems, but now I'm going to do this by myself. Now I have to do this and prove to them I don't need them anymore. They haven't done anything for me for a long time, so I know how to take care of myself.

I lost my innocence by trying to be someone I'm not and kept it going to stay "cool", but now I know what I look like, "stupid!" I messed up, but I know now I got God in my life and that's all I need.

-Stephanie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's good that you can take care of yourself and be independent, but remember there will be times you might need help. There is nothing wrong with asking for that help. The one thing it will do is make you a stronger person.

I got all kinds of problems, but now I'm going to do this by myself. Now I have to do this and prove to them I don't need them anymore.

First Time

Q-vole Beat? Well. This is Rato once again. When I was eleven years old I tried mota for the first time. I was kickin' it with my primo and he told me to take a toke and I did. It felt like the best feeling in my life and ever since then I've been smoking and in two years I started trying more stronger drugs.

When I would kick it with the homies we would get hella high, but then when I wouldn't have money I would go shopping to get more money. But after a while that shhhh got me tired and I just didn't want to use it no more.

In a way I'm glad I'm here, so I can take a break from all that. I want to go back to the calles and just stay sober for as long I can. Well this psycho-minded vato is gone.

-Lil' Psycho, Santa Clara

From The Beat: First, we admire the courage it takes to be so honest about yourself. Second, we admire your realization that drugs, finally, take more out of you than they give you, and your decision to use this forced time-out as a foundation to build a day-by-day future of sobriety. This suggests that you're taking a look at your life through mature eyes. (It doesn't hurt to seek out a group with the same problem trying to stay sober and meeting regularly to talk about it.) And Third, we admire you for how well you express yourself. Keep writing!

Too Many Have It Worse Off Than Me

Damn, that's a lot of people. Sometimes it seems as if everyone is worse off than me. First I think of those without food, without places to sleep; and what about those born wealthy, with no goals, no point, no meaning in life?

What about victims of terrorism, paralyzed and imprisoned in their fear? And even worse off than the victims are the terrorists themselves, how they must feel?

And then there's me sitting in my cell, reading a book, or taking a nap, or maybe eating my tray. Sure it may not be the food I want, but is this life ever as we want it? Isn't it better to be happy with what you have, instead of being so selfish? Isn't my grass green enough?

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You're absolutely right! We can go on and on and complain about everything in life. But then you stop to think about all the millions of other people that got it worse than you. Like children starving in 3rd world countries, war, poverty, and you complaining about something about the food on your tray. Maybe we should all stop and think about the basic things that we already have and be grateful cause there are a lot of people that don't have much.

I'm going to come up this time daddy, I promise, I love you so much!

The Best Lecturer Is My Dad

The best lecturer in the whole wide world to me and my life so far is my own father. I thought drinking and using drugs was fun and all right, but after what he's told me, now I don't want to bother.

He told me once before that one day I will have children of my own and I will lecture them how he did to us. Dad always said, "Yes! There is fun with out alcohol and drugs!"

I look up to my father for being a recovering alcoholic. I want to tell him myself, "Dad, look I stopped it!!"

We took traveling trips to different states to sell his beautiful Navajo silversmith jewelry. Those were the times when I was younger he'd give the best lectures to me.

He tried to teach all of us wrong from right.

I apologize with all of my heart for disappearing into the crazy Albuquerque nights. It brings tears to my eyes thinking how bad I've turned down my father's lectures.

I just want to promise him and mom that this time I am going to do so much better! I'm going to come up this time daddy, I promise, I love you so much! I'm tired of doing bad and messing and messing up. Don't go daddy, please wait for me. Your baby girl is coming back, you'll see!! Just wait and I'll be coming home. No more breaking daddy's heart, no more, no more.

I cried writing this entry, dedicated to my beautiful Navajo dad who is very strong. I know with all my heart, breaking towards him, he won't live for long. I'm sorry daddy; Nicky loves you, oh so much. I hate hurting you, so bad, I deserve a punch! I am coming home and I'm there to stay.

"I love you daughter, stay here with me." Is what I want to hear you say! I'm going to take responsibility and stay there with you. If you go 6 feet under daddy please take me with you!!! I'm sorry dad, but Nicky's coming back!!

-Tweety, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: As the saying goes, "Talk is cheap", make your father and your family proud, follow your words, and remember actions speak louder than words.

Window

Q-vole, Beat? Well, I'm not feeling the topics so I'm going to write what's on my mind.

As I look outside my window, I see another beautiful day, and I think: 'Damn homey, look at that sky and you in the torcida (lock up)! I look at those birds flying by, landing on that green grass looking for food and other shhh and I think: "Damn dog, I wish I could be a bird," so, I could fly away out of this place. So, I can go somewhere nice and peaceful. So, I can just chill, kick back with no worries whatsoever. But as I look back and remember where I'm at, all I can do is buzz in and ask for some toilet paper, so I can walk around the unit before I can go back to my room and look outside the window and start dreaming otra vez (once again.)

-San Jose, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It seems like being locked up really gives people a different perspective on how importance freedom really is. This piece really captures the feeling of being incarcerated. Beautiful writing.

Dear Beat

What's up Beat?

So the news with me is that I leave in 2-3 week from now I'm going to ROP, Nevada. I'm excited a little because I know I will get a lot of positive things out of this program.

A lot of people tell me it is a very difficult program, but one particular staff here in juvenile hall taught me that it's all in your mind. People that have a weak mind are not very successful in life. People don't understand what "putting your mind to it" means, but I learned this from being in jail. I never knew this before, and at least now I know this, so my life will be a lot easier knowing this.

I believe that I can graduate ROP, regardless of what anyone says, because I believe I have potential in my self.

-Convict, Alameda

From The Beat: We are very glad to hear that your level of confidence is really high. You gotta keep your head high and anticipate a lot of positive things from the program you're about to do. It's good to hear that you're mentally and physically ready to go about your business. Do it, we believe in you also.

A Mark Like A Stain

In the past years I have been through pain

It comes to me a lot like rain

It leaves a mark in my life like a stain

It used to drive me insane, the
anger will run through my veins.

When I get mad a lot

My nice for others seems to rot

I feel like I'm tied up in a knot.

I used to release my anger by being a slanger and a gang
banger

While that went on everyone was in danger.

My advice for the people that have been hurt in the past

Is "it won't last" Even if it seems the hurt won't leave
fast

Or if you feel you're being harassed

Remember the way to go isn't blast blast....

-Lil' L, Santa Clara

From The Beat: These are words to live by, and a great rhyme too. Why do you think so many people DO end up thinking that the "blast blast" is their only answer?



I Don't Know What to Call It

I think real fast but I write real slow
 Because some of my emotion I don't wanna show
 I build a brick wall to cover it up
 they try to get in and never give up
 I'm colder than ice I'm frozen solid
 This feeling I have, I don't know what to call it.
 Is it anger, rage, depression, or sadness?
 I think they're all mixed together creating this madness
 These visions I see, they play with my brain
 These walls and my problem just make me insane
 I'm sick of this ignorance I'm tired of games
 I'm gonna kick it in drive and shake all these lames
 Are you worse off than me? Or am I worse of than you?
 I got some holes in my socks and Velcro on my shoes
 I'm gonna wrap this up I can't write no more
 The room's too loud and my head's getting sore.

-Young J, Alameda

From The Beat: Your skills never cease to impress us at Beat HQ, Young J. Week in, week out you bring your heat. We hope to see your name in lights one day.

Worse Off Than Me

It is a lot of people worse of than me. How about the mothers with no husbands, kids with no dads? And what about all the starving families in the other countries that die 'cause they're not strong enough to survive?

And what about all the kids that have no parents, and all the kids that was left in the gutter without nothing or no one?

So I have it good to have clean clothes hot meals and a family that cares.

We need to take action and start acting like we care and help better this world we live in.

-Ghost Writer Turk, Alameda

From The Beat: If everyone listened to what you have to say, all the Beat readers and more, imagine: The world could become a better place! But of course we all must start with ourselves. How are you personally making the changes you talk about here?

Insinuated Pain

Insinuated pain that can't be relieved no matter how hard I try

The loneliness of my bleeding heart then I cry.
 No matter how low I weep the ambition in my heart creep

Constant yearning is turning in my sleep.
 Thinking of the days me and another had
 But my brain rush is telling me it's bad
 Yes Lord yes I love my dad,

But the cold harmless streets take you piece by piece
 Crunch you up there go my insinuated pain.
 There go my heart beat.

After heating ninjas up and serving him as a hot meal to eat
 cancer that's my insinuate heart beat.

Who to turn to? Mommy, who's under six feet and is deceased?

Ha ha, guess not

So who do I turn to back to the streets?

I can't I can't let them take me piece by piece

So who do I listen to?

My insinuated heart beat.

-Blueberry, Alameda

From The Beat: You said it: You can turn back to the place where warmth turns to heat/in the poems that you write for The Beat /the poet in you knows the cure/For all the misery you've had to endure/You don't need the street life/Go legit - time to greet Life!

How Is This Life?

I feel like a trapped animal
 Stuck in a bright room but not from the sunlight
 I can't see the sunlight

How is this life?

Life is full of adventures and places to go
 Instead locked up dealing with yo' mind and soul
 Continue to read books so my mind can grow
 Counselor repeating the same shhh I already know
 How is this life?

Food is horrible, a home-cooked meal I miss
 Pull back the plastic "what the hell is this?!"

The same a-- food every day, every week
 They feed us shhh Hannibal wouldn't eat
 Lights on all night, how I supposed to sleep?

How is this life?

PO's don't listen, judges don't look at situations
 First time offenders, don't matter, -straight to a placement

Fake ninjas come in here, running they mouth,
 I feel like punching in the face, in any incident
 I didn't see, and don't ask me for no statement

How is this life?

I lost my freedom but I didn't lose my rights
 The system knows they don't treat us right
 Goals I see but feel I'm losing sight
 What I keep repeating to myself, "how is this life?"

Keep yo head up and hold it down

Keep it solid till the day you touch ground
 Search for God and I guarantee you will be found
 Three strikes, leave home, now he's off the mound

How is this life?

Three strikes with the ball, you lose a game and might want to fight

Three strikes with the law, you lose your freedom and you lose your life.

-Youngster, Alameda

From The Beat: It is no kind of life, and you are wise to wake up to the harsh reality of the system now, while you still have options. Thanks for the astute observations.

I Felt Like I Had To Prove A Point

I have been pressured to doing a lot of things, like busting a window. It was me and my patnas in a car, and we stopped at this house and they kept on telling me to throw a rock and bust the window. 'Cause I was the only one with a black hoodie, and they had on white t-shirts so they told me to do it.

But the first time I said no, and then they just kept on asking me to do it, so finally I just got tired of them asking me. I got out the car, picked up a rock off the ground, and threw it at the window. The window busted -- I could have said no, but they kept on asking me, and I did it because I felt like I had to prove a point. If I wouldn't have did they would have been sayin' I'm a "sucka," I "went out," and all that other stuff.

I didn't wanna hear it, it so I did, and like thirty minutes later we got caught. That's why I'm in here right now. And no, I would not let no one influence me to do it again, 'cause I'm the one who is in trouble and not them.

-Lawrence, Alameda

From The Beat: There's a great expression. "A friend will never lead a friend onto danger." It seems like these "friends" led you straight into trouble, and they didn't care at all about what you would go through. Instead they called you a "sucka" for following the strong inside part of yourself that knew it was a bad idea. So we sure hope you get some new friends, who give you real respect and who watch your back, instead of stabbing you in it.

Inspired By The Beat Cover Art of Issue 12.42

This piece reminds me of now-a-days when I'm locked up.

It reminds me of when I used to smoke weed.

It reminds me when my heart was broke.

The hands on the bars remind me of me being locked up right now.

The chains when they handcuff me and brought me to juvenile.

The two tears of how I used to cry when I got locked up.

The leaves remind me of weed, how I can't wait to smoke.

The thorns remind me of when they poked me in the ass.

That means: when I got caught.

-Alejandro, Alameda

From The Beat: You were inspired by the art, and the art inspired you to make a poem that is also art. That's as deep as it gets.

Worse Off Than You

When I was walking around or just chilling in Berkeley, I would always see this bummy-looking kid. One day, I started talking to him and he told me that he has been homeless for over a year.

The kid is only fifteen and it bothers me to see someone so young in that situation, but every time I see him he always seems to be in a good mood.

He has it worse off than a lot of people, but he still makes the best out of his situation.

When I see him and I have some extra money, I take him to McDonald's downtown and buy him some food or something. I don't know how he became homeless or what kind of background he comes from, but I doubt that it was his fault. He should have somewhere to call home but he doesn't. He has some friends but I doubt that they are doing much better than he is. He is the person that I think about when I think things can't get any worse. There is always someone out there worse off than you.

-Young B, Alameda

From The Beat: That is really cool that you buy this guy food sometimes. Too many of us turn away from homeless people and try to put them out of mind. But it is all of our responsibility to look out for others who are struggling just to get by. Your generous spirit and willingness to step up are admirable.

Please, God

Right now scared to death wondering if I'm going to get released to home detention or not on my upcoming court. I really want to go home. But lawyers and other people telling me my case looks bad, "Don't think you're going to be able to go home."

Wishing I can go back in da hands of time and never get caught up. Right now facing a felony charge against me. Scared to death I'm never going to go home again to see my family. Just praying that they will forgive me and give me another chance, another chance to start over and straighten up my life.

I know all the thing I done wrong and I regret it. I already learned my lesson and all I want to do is change and start all over. Please God, just give me another chance so I can prove to You that I'm different.

-Crow, San Francisco

From The Beat: We can feel how sincerely you are praying to God for another chance to prove that you can do right. We hope you get that chance, but we also hope that you will write us a piece about the specific steps you plan to take when you get that other chance. What specifically will you do differently? What will you stop doing? What will you start doing? If "God helps those that help themselves," what's your plan to help yourself?

Worse Off Than A Lot Of Others

You know, I've been reading The Beats, and I even went back and read some from a couple of years ago, and it be funny. I was reading a Beat from two years ago and there was a lotta people talkin' 'bout how they hate jail, and ain't gon' never come back, an' how they're gonna get a job and stay out. But the funny thing is how half of 'em is up here wit' me at the Ranch. Some more is either at the hall or 850 (San Francisco County Jail,) still wolfin' that shhh.

They lied to themselves so much that they're starting to believe it, and even today the new generation of kids at the hall of kids talkin' that same shhh. They up there cryin' and complainin' about a couple of petty ass months or two that they doin'. It's even some people cryin' over havin' to do eleven and a half months at the Ranch, when it's people gettin' sentenced right now as we speak to -decades in jail. So if they're witchin' and moanin' over months that you could count with yo' fingers, wait 'til they hit the big time, doin' football numbers in years. But there's people whinin' like they been down for so long, and they can't wait to get out, and how they gon' change, knowin' damn well they'll be back in a month, sometimes less, but fo' sho', in under six months. Then they'll be back whoofin' that shhh again. But, really, nobody hear not a peep from the real men doin' real time. They much worse off than 99% of us, but don't say nothin', just do their time.

-Birdman, San Francisco

From The Beat: Can you understand why there are youngsters, some as young as ten to thirteen, who are scared up in juvy, especially when they have never been away from home? Many young men and women in juvy complain because they're bored, lonely, trying to be cool, hate being told what to do, and deep down many are frightened about what their lives will be like when they're free again. What about you? To your credit, you may not complain, but what are you doing to prepare for the outs, to make sure you'll never mess up and be back in juvy or jail?

My Childhood

I can't tell out my heart if I wanted to.

If I tell them out, it's going to be too long and harsh. Your childhood memories will stay forever, like a tattoo. Given a violent childhood, it affected my future and what I had to do.

A lonely child looking for love in a messed up place. My father must've thought, "Oh, it's going to be easy; those two kids I don't have to raise."

I never thought the one person I loved would leave me! He used to take my sister and my envelop money (Chinese presents).

Not only that, but tons of domestic violence, too.

My heart hurts so much, he never had a clue Why did he choose his street life over family and loved ones?

Remembering that painful memory when he pulled out that gun.

I've always blamed everything on momma Didn't help her feel better about our struggle, instead I brought hella drama.

The one that gave me life The one that gone through poverty with the two kids she loved...

I love you momma.

-Chinese Boy, San Francisco

From The Beat: You can show your momma just how much you love her when you get home, by listening to her (and talking to her when you don't like what you hear), and by avoiding the so-called "friends" who would lead you into activities that hurt others as well as your mother and yourself. We hope you never have to experience this pain again, but that's mostly up to you.

Worse Off Than You: A Short Story

Dirge walks to his mailbox outside and stares at the pile of mail, saying "credit card...my results for the BAR Exam...bill...bill... Playboy magazine? How did that get in there?" "What the heck, four hundred dollars is all I get for my tax rebate, ain't that something."

Dirge slowly walks back into his house, going through the rest of his mail.

Shortly, the phone rings. "Hello?" "Hey man, how's it going?"

Dirge questions the mysterious person on the phone. The man's name is Lector.

An hour passes, then there is a knock on the door. Dirge opens the door, only seeing Lector. "Come on in", Dirge says.

Lector walks in Dirge's house looking worried. There are forty second of silence, then Lector breaks the silence. "What's going on, Dirge?"

"Nothing, I'm pissed that I have a bill that is nearly four hundred bills, and that's all I have on my tax return." "Hard times" Dirge says, with a smile.

Cutting him off, Lector says "times my foot!"

"What's wrong with you?" Dirge questioned.

"I'm dying of cancer," Lector said in a quiet voice.

Dirge says "What!"

"Yes, I'll die in less than a year," Lector replied.

- The Young Voice Of Juvenile Hall, Alameda

From The Beat: It is a rare treat when we get a short story during one of our juvenile hall writing workshops. Your dialogue is great, along with the scene of a regular day in a regular guy's life, interrupted by suspense and a shocking revelation. It reads like a scene out of a movie. Nice job! One other thing: your choice of names for these characters is really interesting. Why did you name them Dirge and Lector? For anyone who isn't familiar with the word "dirge", the dictionary defines it as "a funeral song...expressing mourning in commemoration of the dead." And a "lector" is like someone who reads out loud in a religious service. Interesting!

What I've Learned

I was taken from my mom when I was one-and-a-half and I've had it rough ever since then. I raised my lil' sister, -it's been me and her ever since. However, they split me and her when I was eleven and I was put into a group home.

Ever since two years old, I've been switching from place to place, sometimes far away from any family I had. That's what made me grow up so fast. 'Cause nobody was gonna be there for me, so I had to learn things myself and if I needed something, I had to go out and get it.

I've seen many people who had a worse life than me. Like, I've been around people who live in a car and don't got food, and they try to get a job and nobody wants them. I've been around people who had to do bad things just to feed themselves and their kids.

I've never complained about my life 'cause I know there's people who have it worse than me. That's what keeps me going.

In anger management, we were talking about how when you're mad, how do you handle it and what ways you could handle it differently? People said drink and smoke, but after they come down from their high or drunkenness, the problem will still be there. So what the message meant is to handle the problem at the moment before anger wins over your mind and causes you to do things you will regret.

-Terrell, Alameda

From The Beat: You have gained a lot of wisdom during your few years in this world. Thank you for sharing your life story and your thoughts on anger management with The Beat. We hope to hear more from you. Have you located your sister? If not, could your R.O. help with this?

Worse Off Than Me

You have it worse than me,
I sleep on two mattresses with a pillow, you sleep in the streets

And have nothing but your arm to lay on, you have it worse than me,

Just the way you eat; you eat what people give you, I eat what I get to,

But I get full meals three times a day, and yes, I pray,
You have it worse than me, just hope and pray that some day

You get off your ass, do something with your life
Maybe you'll think twice about what you're doing,

You may be my uncle, but to some,

You're just a bum on the streets.

-Lil' C, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There is a poignant mixture of pity and contempt in this sad poem about your homeless uncle. We hope he gets his life together.

Loss of Innocence

Wassup Beat? This be your Viet Boy coming from the max. Today I'm gonna write about the loss of innocence. I'm not really sure when did I ever lose my innocence. It's gotta be somewhere down the line when I was younger through how I grew up and the environment I lived around. Growing up and looking up to my brothers was the most part of it. I just wanted to be just like them and did the things they did.

But even though until now, getting shot at, doing drugs, getting arrested or whatever, it is hard to move out of the way when this shhhh is all around you. It's all part of life at the end, the older we get the more challenging it gets, especially with all the responsibilities we have as a young man.

Sooner or later we gotta start thinking with our heads and not our asses, because the challenge in life will be with me 'till the day I'm dead, but I know that innocent child is still somewhere in me. A'ight Beat I'm out, late

-Viet Ox, Santa Clara

From The Beat: In a way, what you're saying is that sooner or later, we all have to start thinking like grown ups. We're glad that you are seeing things from more responsible eyes sooner rather than later. The trick is to let that innocent child deal like an adult with the real world, which is never easy for anyone. But we know you can do it.

Restarting With School

Wazzup Beat Within? I'm just in here again in the halls chilling, but I'm not that frustrated. I just have to be up in here until the 16th of this month, so it's going all good for me.

I really appreciate you guys coming up in here, but fo' real, when I come out of here I really trying to change my life around, like start going to school every day. I really want to go to a really good college for I can be somebody in life. I ain't trying to end up like a loser. I really trying to get a good job f for I can get money, and money can get me a house and a car.

But I really got to start by going to school. School is the only key to a good life. To be successful, you just have to go to school and stay in school and don't take no detours.

Peace out Beat Within!

-Young Racs, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're a little puzzled. We applaud your desire to get a good education and to go to college, but if that's your goal, what we don't understand is why you're "in here again." There's no way you can achieve your goal if you keep handing away your freedom to this system. So, besides going to school when you touch down, what else are you going to do — or stop doing — when you get out?

My Loss of Innocence Due To Drugs

As I remember when I was a little girl I was smart and went to school and didn't do bad things, but as I got older things changed.

When I turned about 10 years old my mom was a big old crack head. My sister and I would sit in our rooms and cry and cry while my mom was in her room-smoking crack.

So finally I turned 11 years old, she was still messed up on crack, but then I started smoking bud with my sister, so I started on drugs.

Then finally I was the age of 12, I was running away getting high and doing what I wanted to do. But then I was finally 13 years of age and was still running away and getting high, and started snorting lines of cocaine, coming in and out of the D-home.

Then I turned the age of 14 and was still doing my shhh. Then I had got hooked on meth, which is my drug that I'm hooked on now, and it the reason why I'm in this D-home.

- Antonette, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's a shame you had to start your young life the way you did, yet some times were not given a choice in life. The best we at The Beat can say is get the help you need, break the cycle of drugs so when you have children they don't have to go through what you did.

Esa Historia Temerosa

La historia que todavía me asusta fue cuando un hombre sacó un arma para dispararme en la cabeza. Eso fue cuando tenía sólo diez años de edad. Recuerdo que fue en mi país, Honduras, en una cantina de mala muerte, situada en la colonia Villa Franca.

Estaba caminando por ahí cuando escuche un pleito. El hombre estaba borracho y discutiendo por una apuesta que habían hecho. Cuando estaban jugando Chivo en su cantina se peliaron a puños limpios dos amigos. Uno de ellos perdió, debido a que era viejo y el otro era joven. Los separaron y el que perdió no se quedo conforme. Yo seguí mi camino. De pronto salio por la puerta con su arma y disparó sin saber a quien pudo haber lastimado. Yo estaba enfrente de él. Solo me quedo tiempo de tirarme al suelo.

From The Beat: Hicistes bien en haberte tirado al suelo, porque de lo contrario no estuvieras aquí ahorita diciendo esta historia. Busca la manera como alejarte de esos lugares que te pueden meter en problemas y te pueden quitar lo más valioso en la vida, la vida.

That Scary Story

The story that still scares me was when a man pulled out a gun to shoot me in the head. That took place when I was only 10 years old. I remember that it was in my country, Honduras, in a ghetto bar placed in Colonia, Villa Franca.

I was walking around there when I heard a fight. The guys were drunk and they were arguing over a bet. When they were playing Chivo in the bar, they started a hand to hand fight. They were friends. One of them had lost giving the reason that he was older than the other one. They were separated and the one who lost wasn't satisfied. I kept on walking. Suddenly the other one came out the door and started to shoot not giving a damn about who could have gotten hurt. I was in front of him. I only had time to get down on the floor.

-Bill

From The Beat: You did the right thing in getting down, because if you hadn't you wouldn't be sharing this story. Try to stay away from those places that can get you into trouble or that can take away the most valuable thing we all have in life, our lives.

People Who Tell Me

They tell me, "You keep messing up you gone go to jail then to the big house."

I say damn that shhh, you just talking from the side of yo' mouth. I don't care. I'm gonna do what I do 'cause I wanna do me. Don't matter if I hurt their feelings I'm just trying to do me.

They say, "You don't listen to yo' moms, days of your life will be numbered."

But, I do what I do and let it bounce off me like a jumper. They say mo' money leads to mo' problems. Now that's one fact that I do know with all the drama. I've been through, I be like screw you if you doubt me.

My mom said once to me, "You keep robbing, shooting, and blowing like you are, karma gon' come back around fo' sure."

I know I'm in denial, but I'm gonna still rob, shoot and blow. I be like, "Damn, why mutha suckas trying to tell me how to run my life?" I understood what they were saying when I came back to jail and got that strike.

It's a cruel world out there with mean people in it. I have a choice either I choose to lose or win it.

I'm gonna win it on everything I live fo', to make my life better. Back then I didn't hear 'em, I'm locked up now. I understand thoughts - lectures from my mom, pops, grandpa, grandpa, brother and uncles and aunts. All lecturerers don't care, but most do care. It's the thought that count and the principle that they even there.

-Boe, Alameda

From The Beat: You already know where robbing, and shooting leads to, we don't need to explain it. Everyone that's telling you to stop doing what you doing is telling you because they love you and they don't wanna see you end up dead or in the pen. It's up to you, you're grown up enough. You choose your lifestyle.

In The Past Year...

In the past year, as you will hear

A mother has gotten ill against her will

Fighting to stay alive, paying all more than five

Getting all those treatment, with debts of payment

With her head going bald, as life is going odd

As the treatment ends, her sickness seemed to be gone
all to an end

Six months has passed by, no illness around to fly
Another five months gone, with the Mother finally gone
The illness came back to strike with a silent attack.

All alone, forced to come to this new home

Adjusting to the change, as everything seems strange

Introduced to this life of rush and fun

As it all seemed like getting stuck by a knife

When everything comes down, getting caught by the
hounds

And taken to this place, that doesn't seem too safe

Thrown in jail, which has a very small cell

Going in and out of court with full of hope

Only to wait for the next date, coming back with nothing
but hate.

Blaming yourself, for no one can help

Abandoned by others, by another Mother

Nothing but regrets, filled with sorrow

Waiting to get out, to be finally free

In the past years, I have been living my life.

-Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Everything might seem strange, and things might be bad/ But at least there is a reason why you should be glad/ You got your health, and pretty soon you'll be free/ And then you can live your life the way you want it to be/ Things happen in this life that you can't control. We hope the next chapter of your life is full of promise!

Desperate Thinking

I'm desperate to eat but I have no funds
I'm hungry as hell somethings got to be done
Where's my gun?
I know what to do
open the cash register give me that loot
Don't think I'm playin' because I'll really shoot
I don't want to hurt nobody just need some food
Just give me the money don't be a fool
I'm hungry, I'm starvin'
I take the money and split
Came out with enough money I can eat and pay the rent
Police after me but I had to eat
Forget it guess I got to lay low for a week
Am I wrong?
Because I gave someone a little scare
I tried to get money the right way
but didn't get nowhere
I get back to the crib, sit and chill
I think to myself am I really wrong?
Nope because,
I was jussy desperate to live

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: The one question you asked, "Am I wrong?" the answer to that question is yes, not only is it against the law but you are hurting more then just the person you are robbing. Working at a honest job may not be easy, and may not bring you the instant cash you want. But it will be worth it in the long run.

Couldn't Wait

Well it was like yesterday when I just turned fifteen, and I was at home saying I can't wait 'till I turn eighteen and get the hell out my grandma's house and do my own thing.

Now I am two months from turning eighteen and I wish I could be fifteen again and not worry about becoming an adult, because I was too worried about being grown that I never had a childhood besides being in the hall and getting a Christmas gift - a county sweatshirt with out Alameda on it.

-Weather, Alameda

From The Beat: You can't go back in time to when you were fifteen. Sometimes, we have that mentality, we wannabe a lot older than we actually are. And then when we get to that age we reminisce, or wish we were younger. You are in a predicament where you have to act your age if not older. But deal with it. Move forward. Life is all about growing up. That doesn't mean you can't have fun, but make wiser choices.

Listen!

What's up my name is Jamon but you can call me J.

First off, let me start off by saying listen to the ones that care. Like for instance I would not be in the hall if I would've listened to my lecturers.

I mean, I've been lectured by my Grandfather and he tells me the dudes I hang with, watch them because they could be out to get you. I haven't found that out yet but I will.

And my Uncle always lecture me about coming home after school. As a matter of fact, I would not be here if I would have listened.

Or the lecturers about school like my momma dropped out now she is a dope fiend. And I'm sure my pops would not be in jail if he finished school. Like me I got caught cutting at school and I got arrested.

So man just pay attention to what they say just watch how things are when you at least listen to one lecturer.

-Jamon, Alameda

From The Beat: You right, sometimes if we just would've listened to our loved ones then we wouldn't be in the mess we're in right now. You made a mistake so learn from it. Don't keep making the same mistakes, especially when you recognize the mistakes you've already made.

Loss Of Innocence

Seems like yesterday I was
just a little girl,
playing with my dolls
and just chilling,
watching my TV.
Then one day I was
suddenly given the choice
to
stay a kid, or to grow up.
All it took was the words:
"You want to try it?"
and that white cloud of
smoke
seemed to take my
innocence.
Ever since then, I wanted
to turn back the hands of

time
to take back the hands
of time
to take back what was once
mine
a piece of me that was
left behind.
But I can't and that's what
I have to keep in mind,
every time I think
back to that time.

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara
From The Beat: Perhaps you can't take back the hands of time but you can move forward. Time is a funny thing and often we feel as though we can never get away from what happened in the past, but as the song goes: "The future's so bright, I gotta wear shades."

Loss Of Innocence Due To The Dope Game

The first time my life really changed was a fight that led to me smoking weed, and after that I began to drink. The biggest step of change had to be when I began to sell dope in Oakland, California. I was very afraid because there were a lot of OG's that had been in the game for a long, long time.

I began skipping school to get high every day and sell dope. I was small, with a lot of money, and kids would try and jump me.

One day in middle school, with almost about two hundred dollars and fresh Jordan's on my feet, a group of kids who were hatin' on me tried to jump me. I ran and came back with my older cousins. They all had guns, and the kids ran like I thought they would.

After that, in the beginning of my high school years, I began carrying a small 22 revolver because of all the dope I sold and the money that I had. At that point, I couldn't keep it solid with nobody else, I had to keep it solid with myself. Things never stopped thereafter.

At the age I am now, sixteen, I have a baby boy on the way. I'm going to name him Kjaun Dwayne J., pray every day and night he doesn't follow his dad's footsteps, and always play my part.

- Lil' Jon-Jon, Alameda

From The Beat: It doesn't seem like you are worried about your role in the game. How can you expect your son to avoid the path you took if you haven't changed your own ways? You have some serious decisions you need to make about your life before this baby is born, or else he might grow up with a dad in prison or worse.

Dreaming

Dreaming about getting out
So I can prove everybody wrong
Who in me they doubt
Messed up a lot of times
But this here is my last
I'ma switch up my game plan
'Cause I learned my lesson
And that I did fast
Sittin' in here watching the days pass by
When I could be sittin' at home or in a classroom
Floatin' high
And I'm not talking about off coke, weed, or even dope
Me, I'm thinking high off knowledge
'cause a few years from now
Tyshawn will be a student in da white man's college
Know that, but also know this
I messed around while I was young
Played da game 'til it was no longer fun
But now it's time to step it up
'Cause with this crime life
The system got me messed up!

-Tyshawn, San Francisco

From The Beat: Your flow is tight, but you don't have to dream at night, 'cause the day you get out is gonna come. And when you get out, do get high off knowledge and go to college. Leave this crime life and don't look back. Keep pushing forward for a positive lifestyle... jail free!

Seven Years Old

When I was seven or eight I moved out here to San Jose from Richmond, it is hella different out here. I like it out here more, but a lot of my ninjas live out here.

Ever since I was ten I've been moving from house to house because my mom was using drugs and actin' a fool.

I got jumped into my cousin's gang when I was twelve and have been in and out of juvenile hall since I was thirteen.

I hit my first joint when I was ten and everything went down hill.

-Smurf, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope the best for your mom and we hope she is doing better and staying off drugs. As for you, you seem like you have limited options. But how do you feel pretty much following the same footsteps as your mom? Now, you're using drugs and actin' a fool. What else can you do besides be in a gang? Can you go to school and get an education? Can you get a job? Or do you feel like being in gang is all there is to life?

Where Am I?

Why am I trapped in this strange place
 the size of a bathroom,
 barely enough room to pace

I feel like a hamster, when it comes to pace
 When I eat, I add salt just to get the taste

Where I'm at, it feels like Geometry
 Cause I'm sharing a box of three

The length, width, and height
 Is divided by the v

'Cause Box I, is where I sleep

Box 2, is where I eat
 Box 3, is where I shoot three's

Where we dress the same, like Siamese
 See females here an there, but they only a tease

I'm free, looking for the double ee's
 When I pray, I just ask please

Hold on, wait, is this a cell?

Yep damn, I'm back in jail

-Cameron, Alameda

From The Beat: Some dazzling rhymes here, Cameron, you end up in jail in the poem but in real life that skill you bring to your flows shows your mind is still free! Keep it that way, and dazzle us some more!

When I Got My Lecture From My Lil' Brother

When I always get lectured it's always by my Dad. But then one day it was July the fourth and I got lectured by the person I really love, my Lil' brother. He told me that I should do good in school, so my Mom would let me go over there and spend the night on weekends. He told me my Mom made up lies saying that I was always too busy for him.

He told me I've got to get my shhh together and stop smoking, and drinking. He told me to stop wearing my shoes Cortez' with my long socks; he said I'm just an automatic target.

I am what I am inside, but I don't have need to show the whole city who I am, the beast of the east and proud of it. He doesn't want to see me in a coffin. And it's a trip, he's only nine years old and I failed to listen to my carnale and look where I'm at, locked up in a cell with regret and hate.

-Listo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your brother is right. School is very important. And he's right you don't need to be a walking target for your enemies or give people a reason to try to do something to you. Get your stuff together so you can get out and spend time with your brother. Leave that ol' lifestyle in the dust!

My Loss of Innocence

Many days and many nights been spent in these streets alone

Feelin' bad 'cause my mama stays worried at home
 Couldn't hug or say goodbye 'cause I was packin' a chrome

Teflon chest so I didn't want her feelin' my vest
 Knew it would kill her inside to find I was followin' in my pop's footsteps

Big brotha worked that pirex, so well you would have thought he's a chef

Family full of drug dealers, but I'm the last one left
 Twelve years old and already been around it,
 all chiva, perico, mota and that god-forsaken crystal meth.

In and out the system this gang banging's got me fightin' off death

Tryin' to live for my child, but damn these streets done raised me wild

Seen some crazy ass stuff

We talkin' crack house with fiends lined up in a single file

So much innocence goes lost in these streets,
 But they don't see 'cause they all in denial.

-Kastro, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You might be right, everybody's in denial/ So much crazy stuff on these streets it might make it hard for you to smile/ But you gotta stop thinking 'bout the streets and start thinking bout yo' child/ You don't want him to grow up without a pops, it'll get him acting all wild/ But you know that lifestyle can't only guarantee you jail or death/ So you gotta try to survive, but weigh your options out, and try to do what's best/



In The Past Years

What up Beat and Beat readers. This is your girl Bernadette. Anyways, today's topic is think of someone you hurt in the past years.

Well, the people I hurt is my daughter and family. I'm always away from them, locked up or out chillin'. I know it hurts my daughter and family. I know it hurts my daughter the most 'cause she needs her mommy there to protect her, guide her, love her, care for her.

It's hella hard because my parents weren't there for me, and I don't want my kid to go through the same stuff. It hurts so bad when you're out calling for your mom or dad and neither of them come to see what's wrong, or when you need them the most and they're not there. I don't want to be like my mom. But right now I've just been hella selfish thinking about myself. All I wanted to do is party, kick it with the homies, hit the strip - you know, all that good stuff.

Now I realize it's not about me. I'm a mom now and my beautiful baby girl needs me. Well, that's it for now and forever, because I'll be out of here, with no probation. But 'till I'm out - much love and respect to all I know.

-Bernadette, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We hope you remember these words, your words. Your daughter deserves better than what you received as a child. The only way to make sure she gets what she needs is for you to shape up. Are you a woman of your word? Are you ready to go the next step for your daughter?

Loss Of Innocence

I been the way I am since I was twelve. That's when I started to blow dro. When I was twelve, I became a real-life street thug. I wasn't even staying with my mother at the time, and I'm still not till this day. But I think that's when I lost my innocence, because I really had to "get it how I live". It was, and still is, hard to get money.

I'm only fifteen right now and since I lost my innocence, I been doing a lot of things. But no matter how hectic shhh get, I still manage to be Young Gutta 'cause I truly believe that I bear a name. I been tryin' to get my head right but I keep allowing myself to get pulled back in the same mess that I was supposed to clean up a long time ago, but I'm real.

- Young Gutta

From The Beat: Is the money you are getting worth the risks you are taking? You are a juvenile in the eyes of the system today, but what about a few years from now? We hope that you will think about your future and maybe a safer way to get money.

Worse Off Than You

I think my lil' cousin is worse off then me, because he's only 11. And talking back to his mom and being hella disrespectful and just the other day my grandma told me that he slapped his mom and called her a b**** so he got his ass whooped badly. But he a lot worse off than me.

I get mad at my parents, but if I do that I'll be waking up in the hospital.

-Ericka

From The Beat: Kids shouldn't disrespect their parents that way - but on the other hand, it scares us when we hear you say you'd "end up in the hospital". How physical do your own parents get with you when they get mad? And what do you think of it?

My Name Is Neffew

I am better then these rappers by a long shot

And I have more whips than a car lot

And you know I'm the shhh like a toilet

And every time I spit they like "Boy, stop!"

Their flow is scary like a horror flick

And I higher than a skyscraper on a cliff

Plus, I ride in my scraper like a pimp

The young boy gets chips like his name is dip

And you know I just spit like my name lip

Plus these other dudes stay on that lame tip

And I paint it picture-perfect, no frame snitch

And you know I go dumb like I'm brainless

You could find me wherever the change is

No matter how much I get, I'm never changing

People say Neff's better than Lil' Wayne is

I need some medicine I just came sick

They ain't slick. They get caught in the act

In fact you know I get cheese like a rat

And I won't stop eating until I get fat

Yep, I'm back like the front of a hat,

And won't leave 'till I'm dead

Got cheese, got bread,

Got lettuce, got beef, got everything to make a sandwich

And I know I'm 'bout to get dough because my hand itch.

- Kwamaine

From The Beat: Nice flow.

Me and My Best Friend

Me and my best friend, we have been through a lot in life.

I met her in Oakland,

she was always walking around by herself

, then she started to talk to me and that is how it all started.

She basically lived with me, she always slept over at my house.

That's how cool we were. I miss those days, but now she did some dumb thing and she ended up in here, r

ight where I am, in Juvenile Hall.

She's still my best friend for life and always will be.

Me and her are trying to get it together in life.

We can't always be like this, but I love her like a sister.

No matter what, feel me, ever since day one, we got along.

-Derik

From The Beat: We had to cut a lot of your piece because it was incriminating, but we wanted your sweet words to your friend to get printed in The Beat. We hope you can both support each other as you try to quit some of your old bad habits and get into some new activities that will keep you out of juvy.

My Love

My love is so sweet

My love is so not fair

My love is so innocent

My love is so, so, so love

I love my boyfriend so much

I will do any thing to save my boyfriend's

Life, 'cause I have his child. I love him

Like a fat boy like cake. I love my

Fudol pooh. His the only one that makes me

Feel like I'm real. I get money he get money

We just a happy couple I been with my

Baby father for a long time now I really

Deep game when he send me letter tell me

He get money for me and his unborn child. I peep

Real guda! He love so much I called him in he say

I love I miss I want you to come home baby New New.

We keep our love in the hood, that's what we do.

That's what I want to say I love you.

-New New

From The Beat: We hope that this boy gives you a love that's right/that he respects you and stays in at night/ It's you that makes you real, and the love you feel, but you don't need him to be you, you'll always get through, on what you have inside, your hope and your pride!

Please Don't Leave

Please don't leave me here alone

I wouldn't know what to do without you.

You the key to my lock.

Please don't leave me here alone

Because without you I will be on my own.

Please don't leave me here alone

You are the oven and the butter to my toast without you I can't bake or spread the whip upon my cake

Please don't leave me here alone you are the sheet to my bed

And when I think of you leaving me cops suicide to da head.

Please don't leave me alone

'cause without you I'm on my own

Please don't leave me here alone

'cause in the end we're both gone.

-Blueberry

From The Beat: We don't know if you wrote this for a family you've lost or for another person you've loved or for someone who treated you badly, but these words summon up the feeling of loss and love with great power - so much power that we believe you CAN stand alone because your strength will carry you through!

Flight Delayed

This Dennis. I'm still in juvenile hall. I got a taste of freedom today because I got my release to my group home, but when it was time for me to go my flight got cancelled, so I'm still waiting to start me a new life. I can't wait until I can put my thoughts and goals to work.

-Dennis

From The Beat: We wish you best of luck on your new start! Please keep in touch.

Hard Time

Man, I'm up here at camp stressing out right now. My patna been in the hospital since Halloween. He hasn't woken up, moved, nothing, since Halloween. The doctors say he's either gonna die or wake up with brain damage. Somebody put two tranquilizer pills in his drink at a party.

It's really hard for me not to run from here, but I'm doing my best. He's like a brother to me, this shhh ain't cool.

On top of that, staff up here always doing to much. Yelling all the time, being hella rude, a bunch of unnecessary stuff.

I've only been here two weeks. I'm gonna make it though, I can't be in jail no more. Thirteen plus times is more then enough.

For all you new booty's in the hall, be cool and stop while you're ahead. 'Cause once you get too far in the system, it's a struggle to get out. Much love for all ya'll going through hard times. Keep your head up.

-Jake

From The Beat: There is a saying, "Grace under pressure" and from now on that is what we will think of when we think of you. We will never forget the way you told us the story of what happened to your friend, and how you promised to change your life in his honor. That will stay in our hearts.

The Life for Me

Mostly everybody asks me, "Why do you choose this kind of lifestyle"? Every time they do ask, I just want to tell them to mind their own business, and don't worry 'bout what I do. But I don't want to come on rude like that, 'cause if you can respect me, I will give back the same respect.

Since I been living with my mom I always wanted to get out and start making my own dinero. I choose to do what I do because being raised in the ghetto on welfare is not the life for me. A year or two ago I wanted to click up with a set, because I just like the way they stay together and ride for one another in any kind of situation.

The life for me is all about fast cars, sex, drugs, hanging out with the homies, and just basically putting it down for my homies. The thing I hate most is being in the Hall. But luckily I came to camp. It's cool though, it's way better than being locked up.

But to make a long story short: I just want to tell all the squares in the hall, if you scared of going there, go to church. And to all the homies locked up right now, keep yo head up.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: First off, The Beat would like to thank you for being honest. Too many people write about wanting to change and then do the opposite, and without truth, where would we be? But this life you chose, with the homies and the sex and the drugs and the car, it's all today and no tomorrow. No future, none of the pride of having accomplished something wonderful in life (and we hope you know, you do have it in you to accomplish something in life.) So we ask you, when you "chose" this life? Did you think of the sadness and funerals, the violence and fear that comes with it? Do you really believe that welfare and poverty are your only other option?

I Ain't Complainin'

This to everybody who be complainin' 'bout they time like little girls.

You act like the world is gon' end because you in jail. You a sucka! It's always somebody doin' way worse then you. Just do yo time and quit complainin' like a baby. I been locked up since March, and I ain't complainin'. I voice my anger, but never complain.

Just remember it's always somebody doin' way worse then you.

-Sticky-Boy

From The Beat: We think it's OK to complain, because it means you realize how wrong it is to be locked up. Hopefully that sinks in and becomes the desire to live life right, so you don't ever get locked up again. Be angry, be sad, be confident, be ready to find support and work and help so that this place doesn't become a "second home".

Loss Of Innocence

My loss of innocence is when I started running away from home at the age of thirteen. Everything was going fine until then. I thought I knew everything, but when I started running away.

That's when I started to experience the real world and believe me, it's hard: Don't run away from home.

-Ericka

From The Beat: What happened? What made you run away in the first place? Now that you're a bit older, have you changed your approach? Will you be tempted to run again, or have you put running behind you?

Worse Off Than You

My uncle is in San Quentin for a murder eight years ago and he's thirty-three years old and he is doing 25-to-life. That upsets me because that was my favorite uncle and now he's gone for half of my life and that makes me real mad. When I think of him in there, I get angry and I take my anger out on anybody around me that make me feel kind of stupid.

Now I'm in juvenile hall for something stupid and I miss my daughter. I miss my uncle and my mom writes him for me.

My uncle is like the dad I never had and that makes me sad to see somebody I really care about in my family be gone out of my life forever. It's like my uncle died, but I can still talk to his spirit or something. I hope the best for him but he's got it worse than me.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: It is a terrible loss when someone we love goes away for such a long time. We're sure your uncle thinks about you all the time, too. What advice do you think he would give you, if he could? Do you think he would have any wisdom to share about dealing with anger and avoiding bad situations?

I Know

I know I messed up

But I can't say sorry

'Cause it ain't what you

Wanna hear. I guess

You got tired of lies.

I guess you feel another

Ninja can treat you better

Than what I can do. You?

Don't wanna talk to me no

More then cool it fine.

But before you go, can we make love

One more time.

-Lil' Old

From The Beat: This reminds us of that old-time Diana Ross song, "Touch Me in the Morning". Sorry that things look dark with your girl... what happened? When you say you "messed up," what happened?

From East Coast To West Coast

The day of July 15 is when it happened. I moved from the East Coast, Baltimore, Maryland, to the West Coast in Oakland, CA. The move was very drastic as I left many friends behind and many loved ones behind. I knew that the move would be a big stepping plate for me, but it had to be done, for the simple fact that I got put out of my dad's house and my mom in California was the only one I could turn to for shelter and parenting.

It was really hard, especially because it was on such short notice and I didn't get to say goodbye to a lot of people. So to the Baltimore airport I went and waited for my plane to board, wondering and thinking about all the people that I didn't say goodbye to. I felt guilty about the whole thing, but there was nothing that could really be done. I was at the terminal now boarding the plane. I was so close to being left in Baltimore because the plane was just about to take off as I entered the terminal.

Hours went on as we were in the sky making our first trip to Chicago. We finally arrived in Chicago and little did I realize how big this city really was. I was amazed and overwhelmed at how many people were at the airport. I had to use the restroom and I was kind of hungry but it was so close to the time the next plane was leaving and I didn't want to be stuck in the middle of Chicago, too far from California and Maryland, so I played smart and just got something to eat really quick and figured the plane would have a bathroom on it, so I would use it there.

-Harold

From The Beat: What happened between you and your father that led him to kicking you out of the house? In your opinion, was it unfair of him to do this? Since you are writing this from juvenile hall, we are curious what caused you to get into trouble in your new environment. Do you think California can be a new start for you? We hope that you will write more and let us know how things are going for you.

Desperate Acts

I've been desperate before. Last year I was taken to LA by my family and when it was like time to cut, they didn't take me back. They left me there, and said I had to live down there with my other family members cause I got kicked out of school.

So I was staying there plotting on a how to get home, and one day I packed all my shhh and cut, I walked to Bakersfield. Then got some money and caught the Greyhound back to the town. Now you see me right here.

-Spawru

From The Beat: Are you mad at them for leaving you down there? Were they trying to abandon you, do you think, or maybe were they just "desperate" to get you in a different environment because they didn't know how to help you up here. When you came back up, did you see them? Or did you stay away? This sounds like the beginning to an important story in your life.

Pressured

Let me talk about people getting pressure
They so fake, they need to be taught a lesson.

As I get older my game getting harder.

I'm rolling like the stones,

I need a water bottle.

I wake up every morning thank the man above

I get mad so much I see my pain is love.

I'm a always be me without no doubt

So haters out there keep my name out your mouth.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: It's not about trying to get your game harder/ what you really want is to get it smarter/ don't worry about the haters/ They matter right now but they sure won't later/the only thing that matters is how you maintain/so you can walk into the sunshine, get out of this rain.

Hypocrite

I get lectured by my grandfather. That ninja is a hypocrite. Man I can't stand that man... he makes me sick!! My grandfather thinks he's so damn spiritual but that ninja get so happy when a game comes on or something.

I can't do it no more -- he's got to go.

Or I'll go. Damn.

-Ericka

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you and your grandfather have conflict. But the real question is, does he love you? Does he care for you? Do you care for him? Is he hypocritical in other ways, or is it just that he gets too into games?

Loss of Innocence

This is my last and final visit to Juvenile Hall.

I've said it before, time and time again but for some reason this visit has made me open my eyes. I've been here numerous times and it never seemed to hit me until something drastic happened in my life.

I really do want to change but I know it's gon' be hard. I've been living a certain lifestyle for so long that I really don't want to slip up and mess it up. Who knows? But time will tell.

-Malina

From The Beat: Something powerful and important had happened inside you. What was this drastic thing that changed your vision of it all? And now that you have made this decision, tell us what changes you think you might have to make in order to make this your last and final visit, for real?

Birthday Blues

In jail on my B-Day

Feels like I'm in a war

Also called D-Day

What am I gonna do when I get released
I'll probably still be at home, writing pieces for The Beat!

I'll like the saying life's a "b" and then you die,

Since being locked up, I never seen so many men cry,

When I get out I know what I'm going to do

Don't need to tell me bout you 'cause I don't really care

What you're gonna do.

Being in here's not that bad, all that I feel is the felling
called sad.

-Adam

From The Beat: That feeling called sad was there even before you got locked up, we know how much you've been through, and it's just good to know that you have managed to stay positive under all the stress.

When I Get Mad

When I get mad, I do numerous things. But they depend on who I'm with, where I'm at, or what I can get my hands on. Most of the time, I go shoot dice with my ninjas. It's weird: win or lose, I just like shooting dice. It relaxes me and keeps my mind off the outer world.

Sometimes I'll get some suryp, aka. bo, and that calm me down. But if plan A or B don't work, I go mobbin' with my ninjas or go get some money. That always helps cure my problems 'cause, since I ain't broke, I will be able to go places like Six Flags or the movies or something. But if all else fails, I go see a female and do something. Not always sex, but have some kind of fun. Do something I can't with my ninjas.

-Young Shawny

From The Beat: We all have lots of ways of unwinding, some healthy and some not so healthy. We hope that you will try to focus on the healthy ways that you like to chill, where you aren't hurting yourself (bo) or hurting somebody else.

Lectures I Remember

I remember bein' lectured from my grandma
 I remember bein' disappointed by my mama
 I remember fightin' with my dad
 I remember bein' held by my grandma when I was sad
 I remember when my grandma dead
 Had another grandma that loved me just as much
 instead.
 I remember bein' lectured from my grandma
 I remember doin' things that were bad
 I remember bein' held by my grandma when I was sad.
 I don't wanna remember my dad
 I remember my grandma
 RIP Grandma Dee Dee and Grandma Mary

-Lil' S

From The Beat: Grandmas are amazing people. How can you honor the memory of your two caring grandmothers in your life? What advice would they give you today?

Real Life

I'm sittin in my cell
 Thinking I'd rather be in hell
 Locked down with no bail
 Got me in this weak place, fake ninjas in my face
 Family wishin' I was home
 Thinking where did they go wrong
 'Cause I'm constantly coming back
 But they always have my back
 Always stickin' by my side
 Through the rough and bumpy ride
 Always tell me to hold on
 'Cause it never lasts too long
 And that I will be home soon
 Just make sure I stay out when I do
 'Cause now I have a son
 Who I have to teach right from wrong
 'Cause nobody else will say
 That you can make it big some day
 All you have to say is you, can do whatever
 You want to do
 Just like your life and see
 How joyful this real life can be.

-Lil' Dnice

From The Beat: What do you think it would take to keep you from coming back? Can your PO help hook you up with a job or some other kind of program? Who in your life can help you with the enormous job of being a parent? We hope the next chapter of your real life sees you breaking the cycle of getting locked up.

I Do Too Much

In the past years I have been very disrespectful to my family. And caused my mom lots of pain.

I look back and it has me thinking about what I did. I just want to hope that things change and that when I get out of here, I'm gon' go to school and do what I need, so I won't stress out my mom and other people in my family.

Everybody thinks bad on me, 'cause I do too much. That's why I'm in here now, and back in da days I was so bad and getting kicked out of school... but now I'm just gon' do the right thing. I'm going to try not to look back in the past, because every time I do, I feel really bad 'cause of the things I did.

I straighten myself out from talking back.

-Charles

From The Beat: It's hard to have these feelings, but maybe they're just one painful step in growing as a person. Already it seems like you're learning and maturing. We know you feel shame about what you did in the past, but can you also feel pride in the way you're facing yourself with honesty now?

Life's Fake

Why does it seem like nothing's real, when everything goes bad in my life? Why does it seem that when you're mad you can do anything you want, and not get caught?

And when you finally do, it's like everything is real, and you played the wrong cards

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Now that you know that everything is real, it's time to switch up your cards. Tell us how you plan to play the next hand.

I Hate That Lecture

What's up wit' it Beat? This is Lil' Bj. You know what I hate the most? The lecture. I hate people telling me stuff I already know, or sometimes I just don't wanna hear.

I was born in the ghetto, raised in the ghetto, but that doesn't mean people know me. Sometime it's good to get lectures from family members but even then it's hella irritating listening to their lectures.

I don't like people that don't know me tryna lecture me, it makes me hella mad. Because it makes me feel like they're judging me, and I don't like when people judge me.

That's how I feel.

-Lil' Bj

From The Beat: We feel you - it's like sometimes it can feel like people are talking AT you, instead of talking TO you, like they're more interested in talking than listening. On the other hand, have there been people in your life that were lecturing you because they care, or actually gave you advice that helped you? Are their people wiser that you turn to for guidance? Some of those "lectures" might have some nuggets of truth buried in them... like a stop sign on the street. No one likes the stop signs, but they can keep us alive. What do you think?

You'll Never Know

A lot of people say
 You'll never know what
 You got tell it's gone
 At first I didn't know
 What they was talking
 About but now I do
 Man, I had me a girl
 That would of died for
 Me. She was a ride or
 Die but I pushed her
 To the edge ...I just can't
 Picture her with someone
 Else. Before she left,
 She told me you'll never
 Know what you got till it's
 Gone -- and she was right

-Lil' Old

From The Beat: This is one of several regretful love poems to this broken relationship, it makes us wonder if there is still a chance to repair it... has she forgiven you, have you decided to move on? And how do you feel that you "pushed her away?"

Hurting My Mother

In the past years I hurt my mother by doing stupid things, coming and going to this jail house. In many years, I always was a good kid, but It's the choice that I made.

I was doing the little things in the past years to get my mother unhappy wit' me, like not coming home lying to her.

-Daunte

From The Beat: Do you think things will change, now that you have really thought about the pain you've caused (and felt). Maybe before you were only half aware, but now you've looked it in the face. Do you think you'll do things differently?

Afraid of Getting Hurt

When I think about it, I have hurt so many people in my life during the past couple of years. Especially those who try to be friends with me, I walk away. I'm not too sure of why I behave this way, but I know a part of the issue involves something happened in the past. and a part of me is afraid of me getting hurt.

-Pham

From The Beat: The most important thing is that you truly have insight into what has made you walk away. What was that event in the past, and how has it effected the way you trust (or don't). Our past experiences can be as much of a prison as the four walls that you are in now... but facing up to them can help you find a key out.

The Jail Life

The jail life ain't cool
Just sitting around lookin'
At the four walls, just waiting
For the door to click to get
Your thirty minutes of rec, doing
Everything staff tell you to do
Being treated like an animal locked
Up in a cage. But the only difference
Is you're in a room. Man that is
Not the life I wanna live

-Lil' Old

From The Beat: These are good memories to burn in your mind like a tattoo, so that when you get out you'll remember how much you hated it, and you'll think "I don't want to do anything that might bring me back in there!" Maybe it could motivate you to get what you wanted!

Birthday In The Hall

Well I'm in the hall, and I'm thinking about a lot of shhh, but one thing that is on my mind is being locked up on my birthday.

Because I can't see my family and can't get no "happy birthday" from my mom. That hurts me a lot because this is the second birthday I spend in the hall.

Well my birthday is on Thursday and I'm hoping to be home that day.

-Lara

From The Beat: We hope you ended up home too, but if not, a belated Happy Birthday from The Beat Within. And we hope that your next birthdays are all better.

Loss Of Innocence

I started off the day me grandpa and grandpa
because I grew up thinking they were my parents
and the reason why was because my mom was always
out working
or at parties with her friends and my dad was on the
block
smoking and drinking and kicking it with the homies
but the most thing that was messed up
was seeing my grandpa killing my grandma
with seven shots to her back and one to his dome
they're on their way home
so I'm on the path as my dad
in gangs and going in and out the hall
for a year now
but I'm trying to change for my grandpa and grandma.
So RIP to them and I'll see you soon.

-Big Oso

From The Beat: We are very sorry to hear about your Grandpa and Grandma. We feel for you. We know that you miss 'em but we hope you don't really mean it when you say "I'll see you soon." We hope you ain't gonna see them in a long while. Change and honor your grandparents by not taking the route that your parents took. Live life trouble free, jail free for you and for them.

Changes

It started off when I was young and pops left my mom
I decided to get money whether on the block or a job
I noticed being on the block was risking my life
So I got a summer job on a 9 to 5
I noticed being on the block I had to stay on my feet
So I decided to go Miami and stay with the heat
It was some bad times then something was well
Then my life started to changed when I turned 12,
although before you're 12 You're in God's hands so you
gotta take responsibility and be your own
Man stuff that I'm sayin' ain't no lie
Yo' life good for a minute and changed in the blink of a
eye
And everybody know we either live or die

-Scooby and Lil' D

From The Beat: So what kind of changes are you planning on making? Obviously you ain't in the Miami heat right now, you're in a cold ass cell. Keep working that 9 to 5. Stack your money in a legit way. Go to school too!

Congratulations

I seen you step yo' life up. Congratulations
No more playing in these streets with the people hating.
It's called move on with your life
Become someone and make something happen
If you don't like that life going then go back to clapping.

-No Name

From The Beat: A rhyme this tight deserves a name attached to it!

In The Past Years

In the past several years I have caused pain to my family.
I cause them to have pain for keep getting locked up. The
pain they cause me is when I see them sad it makes me
sad and gives me pain.

I been coming to the hall for the last two years. I
been to the old hall five times and the new hall once. It's
nothing nice and I'm tired of bringing my family pain.

So after this I'm done!

-Keith

From The Beat: That's good to hear! Be done! For real, be done! But what would it take to make that change. Desire is a good start, but then you need practical help and support. Ask your PO or counselor for help!

Being Pressured

I've been pressured a couple of times, mostly into cutting school. I've been pressured not by others but by myself. School to me is not important or at least when it come to money.

Money to me is the most important thing in this world next to family. I mean to have it is. But now I see that school is the most important thing to a teen.

Because without education when I'm grown I won't be able to get a job and make money the right way instead of worrying about the police taking me to jail making money the wrong way. But cutting school got me here today and I see that bein' in jail is not me.

And I ain't cutting school no more.

-Alfonso

From The Beat: It's hard right? School is long-term money, but that short term money is so tempting. The trick might be to find that one teacher that you respect and that cares about you, and really start to find things that you like about school, so you can have a short term reason to go every day. One promise we can make, there's nothing better than the self-respect you will feel inside once you know that each day you are doing something positive for your future!

Messed Up

Everything in this world is full of messed up things and also messed up people. I just want to live my life and get out of Camp Sweeney. Everybody say they gon' change, but we all know that's a lie.

Me I'm gon' change a few things about myself, but I really want to stay the same person. Everything happens for a reason, so do your time because you know you did the crime.

- Dre

From The Beat: Really you don't actually need to change your inner self. Isn't it more about changing whatever habits and actions put your freedom and life in danger? If you did change those things, would it also change how you were inside? Maybe, maybe not.

Loss Of Innocence

When I was little I was going to school doing all my homework, listening to my parents and doing my chores. I use to listen to my teachers and doing everything I was told and was supposed to do.

Soon as I turned fourteen all hell broke loose my mom could not control me any more I did nothing I was supposed to do I turned into a thug I turned into a bad influence on my little sister. At that point in time I was fourteen still my mom said, "Michael you are going down the wrong road I don't want you to go to jail."

Guess what I am seventeen and I am in jail saying, "Man, my mom told me." But when I get out I'm gonna change.

-Michael

From The Beat: Sometimes we take wrong turns and go down the wrong road. And our loved ones always tell us you're going the wrong way, but since we're hard headed we don't listen. But it's good that you realized it now, because some of those wrong turns can turn into dead ends. And you'd rather stop now, and hit reverse while you still can.

What's Worse?

My homeboy from my hood got it worse than me because he's only 18 years old and he's doing life, 25-life in prison, he's in Santa Rita now and then he's going to get transferred to the pen.

All I know is that he was a good person and homeboy when you needed him he was always there for you, but that's how it is in the Bay Area, and when you're in a gang in California.

-Lil' Manny

From The Beat: If he was such a good guy why is he doing life in prison? We're not saying he's a bad dude either just 'cause he's in jail, but why is good guy like your friend doing so much time in jail? Learn from his experience. We don't wanna see you take his route.

Out of Heaven

Damn it hurt for
Me to even think about
It. I thought it was a
Dream. I never picture you
Gone just like that. Man
I never knew that I was pushing
You away. Now I feel like
I just walked straight out of
Heaven. I seen the tear, but
I thought you was playing.
If only I could of loved you
Right.

-Lil' Old

From The Beat: We can feel the love and regret in this poem. What happened? How did it happen? It sounds like there's a tragic and heartfelt story behind this poem - though maybe things have gotten better since then? Let us all know!

This Is Bull

That animal that best describes me is a bull, because when I get mad I can't control my anger and I change at people and it take me a long time to come down.

-Ivan

From The Beat: That's what the bulls are like in the Spanish bullfights. But the thing is the bulls are being manipulated, and then they die violent deaths. Don't be that bull!

Desperate For So Much

From being incarcerated, I felt desperate many times.

First I was desperate to get out thinking, about everything I had missed on the outside.

Then all the fun activities going own at school. All the school dances I had missed. I'm desperate for going to see the movie Saw III. I'm feeling desperate to almost everything, for my freedom and going back to school, for my education, and other school activities such as assemblies, football games and basketball games.

I miss those things and I'm desperate to get back to those activities.

-Justin

From The Beat: The good news is that you have a lot of positive things to keep you happy and out of trouble when you get out. You have a real life to look forward to, full of fun and good things. When you do get out, we hope you write us to let you know how it feels!

Rome Wasn't Built In A Day

What's up Beat?!

Have you been someone who made some bad decisions in him/her life? I am. I tried to turn my life around. I volunteer at a preschool, work hard at school, but have a very bad anger problem, and I took it out on the wrong person and ended up in here. But we all make mistakes.

Rome wasn't built in a day! I say this because I am one hundred percent on the road to change. Once again, Rome wasn't built in a day!!!

-Lil' Reese

From The Beat: Very true, but Rome was built, brick by brick, each day a bit better than the last. The key is not to turn around and knock down what you build. That's the secret to building your own personal Rome!

A Long Story Short

I have stolen a truck before, and I didn't want to take it because I just had a bad feeling about it.

So the person I was wit' was like man you should take it. I was like, "Naw, I'm cool, I don't want to get in trouble for some stupid stuff like that," He was like "you take it!"

He said he couldn't drive it because it was a stick shift.

But I was like, "just do it, we won't get caught," and stuff like that. But after like five minutes, I went and looked inside it and it had a nice deck in it and 2 big 15' in the back.

So after some time he was bothering me I said, "Fine, meet me around the corner, give me like three minutes," and he said, "alright," and walked to the corner.

So to make a long story short I took it and got caught.

-Johnny

From The Beat: When we started reading this, we had a bad feeling that it was going to end where it did, because you told the story like someone directing a movie. We're sorry you got caught - and sorrier that pressure pushed you in a direction you didn't want to go in! Now it's on you to make sure that never happens again, because you should be out there telling stories with happier endings! And next time maybe you can make a short story long!

Worse Off Than You

I've had it pretty bad and being in jail is a fairytale to some of the stuff I've been through these past two years. But I know some one who has had it worse off than me for probably 5 or 6 years now probably.

The last time I seen my cousin was on Thanksgiving some years back. I came back down to LA on thanksgiving the next couple of years and no cousin every time I just thought I missed him and would see him again but I started thinking he was in jail as I got older so I said I would see him when he gets out. My cousin had two strikes and I found out he got 3 strikes and is in Pelican Bay or San Quentin for life he's go shhh rough. For now my life is a breeze compared to the rest of his life.

-Spwarv

From The Beat: Damn, we are sorry to hear about your cousin. And you're right your life is a breeze compared to his. But take a closer look at the picture. You don't wanna head down the same road he went. Learn from your cousin mistakes. You think he'd be happy if he were to find out that you're taking the same route as him?

In The Past Years

In the past year I have gotten into a lot of trouble that I could've prevented, like coming to this place.

If only I would've listened to my dad and my mom and those that care for me... they seen it coming because of my attitude. I thought it was just being cool but, but I think now like those who I've hurt and basically just hurt their feelings.

I apologized and what happen, happened. God in my heart and he will direct me in the right way if I let him. One thing that happen that I could've prevented is let them words come out of my mouth to my father disrespecting him.

-Lil' J

From The Beat: Regret is painful but it's also a great teacher. And yes, it's true, the key thing is "if you let Him." Meaning - if you listen to the side of you that KNOWS what is right and what is wrong.

Thanks To The Beat

I wanted to let you know that The Beat helps me in many ways. The Beat helps me express my feelings. I just wanted to say thanks to The Beat!

-Lil' K

From The Beat: You are very welcome! You are always welcome to express your feelings in The Beat as long as you write Beat appropriately.

Loss Of Innocence

I started worrying about my life when I came to the United States and start a new life it was all good until I committed this felony. My life changed I committed a felony I gotta face the consequences for what I did now.

I'm supposed to do six months in a group home but my PO came to talk to me on Monday and said she was going to recommend the judge the judge to give me 18-24 months, but the judge already said to do six months but anything can happen.

Tomorrow when I get to court, I hope God touches the judge's heart and gives me a chance to do six months and get out to try to change my life around and she also said that I am a least going to do another month in here.

-C

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you're willing to face the consequences. Most people your age are not willing to do that. So just keep a positive attitude about the situation. Be prepared to hear anything in court, hope for the best and expect the worse.

Untitled

When I was younger I thought I'd never go to jail. But as I grew up things started to change. I started to see different things in my life. Violence, drugs and people getting shot. It's hard to live in a world like that when you walking down just watching your back as you walking to your patna house or going to your girl house. In your mind just thinking is something going to happen to me? Is this the end? Or am I going to live another day? Or what's going to happen to me, but someone got it worst then me.

-Jonatan

From The Beat: Sometimes there ain't no escaping our fate. Anything can happen as soon as we step outside the house. We could be walking on the sidewalk and some drunken driver hits you, or vice versa you are driving and someone hits you. There are so many ways to die. The list goes on. But however, there is something you can do about the negative energy around you. You don't have to live life full of violence and drugs. That's only if you want to. You should never feel like you have to. You make the decisions to live by whatever code that you wanna live by.

Free Me An Dirt Fast

We hate the new hall so what can we do to get from behind these four walls and all I do is stand in the window thinking about being on the block off hella bo an the staff tell me to change my attitude but you know I can't 'cause all I think about is Ant (RIP).

-Anthony

From The Beat: You keep on speaking about the block and bustin ya chrome/ And you act like you wearing bulletproof helmet on ya dome/ Our advice is to leave all that violent shhh alone/ 'Cause you gon' keep losing friends/ So nobody really wins/ Or do they?

Poor Choice

My mom use to always lectured me about who I was hanging out with and the choices. I was making she was even talking to me about the time I was coming in the house but I never use to listen to her but now I wish I would of listen to her 'cause my so called patnas is the ones that got me up in here.

-Blew it

From The Beat: Man you should have listened to your mama. But you can't be blaming yo' potnas. You brought yourself here in the first place by not listening. You made your own decisions. Nobody made them for you. Maybe you should try taking a little responsibility for your actions. Then you can start listening to your mama.

Crack Pusher

Dirt laden he push that crack

He keep that hard yeah I bust them macks

I keep that picture in the front of my phone.

Active and Yankee blue whip in front of my home
Go hard for the pages this Lil' Dirt the latest of the greatest

I really get picky when it comes to my money

You just gots to go on my hype when the dice acting funny

A lot of people hate me but I still go to sleep since yo' hood ain't my place I give that thane this earthquake

Two two threes they stay flipping

You fake dudes will never catch me slipping

I'm a real Yankee bra I stay hitting

Dirt laden case I forgot to mention.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: You can be a D-boy/ still getting that cheese boy/ but it ain't coo' when the narcs hit and start yelling "freeze boy!"/ Don't think all that tough shhh suppose to make you a made man/ 'Cause if you continue to play with guns and drugs, your home will either be the grave or the state pen/

Lecturer #2

"My Parents" My Dad told me the same thing over and over.

but I never did listen, he told me to go to school and stay out of trouble.

But I never did listen, my mom told me the same thing over and over.

But I never did listen, she told me to stop running the streets.

But I never did listen, now I'm sittin here writing a beat in jail,

Wishing I would've listened!

-Lil' Bam

From The Beat: You never did listen, huh. Well it's never too late to start listening. Now that you in here think about what your parents were trying to tell you. They don't want you coming to these facilities, they'd rather see you working, or at school getting an education. You need to listen!

In The Past Years....

In the past years I have caused a lot of pain to both my mom and father, by going to jail, getting into fights, and getting in trouble in every school I ever went to.

It caused them both a lot of pain.

-No More Pain

From The Beat: It probably caused you pain, too, always being in trouble and looking like the "problem." We're sorry for that pain... what kinds of things

Loss Of Innocence

It seemed like yesterday I was just going to school not in no trouble with the law.

But I grew up so fast and my life started changing the things I did started changing the people I hang with started changing.

Over the month I started getting badder and badder getting into all the wrong things putting my life in jeopardy

always got to watch my back from the police because I got a thumper on me and from my enemies

I got weed in my life at a young age have older people buy me swisher

Now stop coming back and fourth to jail, and stop robbin' others and stealing cars.

-Older

From The Beat: Do you not care about your life? Do you wanna live in the system forever? Everybody loses their innocence. You can't be a saint. We all make bad decisions, some worse than others. But there has to come a point in time where you have to evaluate what you're doing in life, and if it's putting your life in jeopardy, then why do you keep doing it?

Lecturer

Lecturer are good advice from older people you should listen to them because it going to be useful later in your life

Lot of times adult give me lecturer as I listen everything they say be true.

Usually I don't take action to what they say and later on I end up in some thing bad

or in juvenile hall, and then I think about what they said I wish I would of listen.

-Lil' Dre

From The Beat: We all get advice at some point in our lives sometimes we take it and sometimes it goes one ear and out the other. Then when something happens we think back to when we heard that advice. You know it's never too late not to start listening. By the taking the advice even though you made the mistake, might keep you from making that same mistake again.

Pain to My Family

In the past years, I have caused pain to my family, because I have been making them suffer. They suffer by seeing me in here and not being at the house with them.

-Manuel

From The Beat: Just think about how happy you AND your family if your life and actions took a turn for the safer and more positive. Families deserve to be together, don't you think? You deserve to be home with them, and stay there until it's time to move out on your own. Do you think you could make that dream come true?

Twelve

When I turned twelve I started doing bad thing like getting suspended from school and getting kicked out of school because I either got into a fight or I took someone else's belongings.

Then I reached fourteen which I am right now I started getting into gangs and doing wrong even more than before.

But being in juvenile hall made me realize I was following the wrong steps and not the right steps. But being here changed my life around so when I get out I will be doing what is right so that I can succeed in life. So thank God for putting me here for these twenty- two days because now I will be following the right steps and not the wrong.

-Deonte

From The Beat: Sometimes, we have to really walk in the wrong steps to find out this lifestyle we live is not for us. Now that you have realized, what are you planning to do to stay positive? How would you handle the pressures and temptations you will face when you get out?

When I Get Out

Well, when I get out, I'm going to go back to school and play football and help my family out by getting a job, and helping my mom out at home, and doing better at home, and staying out of trouble.

-Lara

From The Beat: Phew, that's a lot of "ands"! But we feel you, each and every one of them is important... as steps to take to give yourself the life you deserve!

At Ten

When I was ten I started doing bad things because I wanted to fit in more with my friends and some family. But sometimes I over did it and got caught up and I started doing bad in school. I always came home late because I was into drugs. I got expelled. My parents and family said I wanted to be older faster I stole a lot of money from my older brother because I could never save my money I always spent it on stupid stuff.

I never thought that I was going to be locked up but I guess I had it coming. I always went to family parties with my parents. I never ran away from home. It would be too hard on me, my family knows I would never do that.

My mom had seven kids - six boys and one girl - and we all get along, but sometimes we fight I haven't seen my sister in a long time and I know she misses me, she is 10 years old, I am a very young teen, but I feel like I am in the middle of the family. I pray to God everyday that my family is the same and that I get out.

-Alberto

From The Beat: It's hard to try to be accepted by friends, but most importantly your family. We know how it is, you have to try to impress them. But really you don't have anyone to impress. What are you trying to prove by ditching school, doing drugs, stealing money from your brothers? If that's what you have to do to be accepted by your friends, then those people are not friends.

Homeless

I think that people without homes have it worse than me because they are always in the cold and they don't have roofs over their heads and they don't have very much food and not enough money to keep themselves healthy and safe.

-Deonte

From The Beat: You're right people without homes do have it worse than people with homes. We should all feel fortunate to have a bed to lay on. This is a good time to take the time and appreciate everything that you have because there are millions of other people that got it worse than you/us.

Still Mad!

What's up Beat? Yup, still here, yeah, and I am still mad because I am still mad, but hopefully I get out tomorrow because I'm tired of being here in a little room with six walls. And I hate waking up and looking at the gray toilet and I would prefer to be at my house with my family and sleeping in a real bed and I would love to eat real food and be outa here.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Well we would be mad too but you gotta have patience. Don't be so anxious to get out, be anxious to stay out! Everybody always talks about getting out, but nobody ever mentions anything about how they're so anxious to stay out! What's the plan to staying out?

All Bad

When I was ten I started stealing bikes I'd take boys off their bikes and ride off. I had a bike at home, but when I didn't I'd take a bike. I just don't walk.

When I was eleven my life got hard that's when I started coming to the system I had a warrant and I stole a dog I stayed here for a month I was the littlest person in here which made it hard when I got out I was put on house arrest.

I been here three times already, I'm 12.

-Lil' Nuk

From The Beat: Why do you have to steal? It's not cool to be taking other people's property like that man. Don't make things hard for yourself. You gotta stop making the same mistakes over and over if you wanna stop coming to the halls.

At a Young Age

It all started when I was twelve years of age. When we moved from another spot to another. The people I used to hang around, people that used to do bad stuff, but never did it people just labeled it as that 'cause I used to hang around.

So one day I was thinking that I wanted to be in a gang so I got in a gang that gets down, that's one of the reasons while I'm in here. Another reason is that I be too concentrated on girls and stuff instead of worried about staying out of trouble.

And if I do go to jail, how will that affect my family? How would they feel? Some of the reasons was that I just wanted to kick it and stuff and be with everybody else and just have fun, but fortunately having too much fun got me locked up. In here behind bars over some stupid stuff it made me feel that my life is wasted and the way staff talk to you up in here make you want to marry school but now when I get out I'm looking forward to going to school and stuff even though I was going before I came in here.

-Jhacorieo

From The Beat: True you are lightweight wasting your time being in jail but it's up to you to make the most of it. You can either let the time do you, or you can take advantage of this time in jail by reflecting and coming up with a game plan that will keep you out of jail!

Loss Of Innocence

I had my loss of innocence when I was twelve years old. I use to kick back with older kids that were 17-19. I wanted to fit in so bad, that I would steal 15 dollars from my moms apron every day she came home from work before she counted her tips from being a waitress.

I would take the money to the park with homeboys and buy a 40 of Old E, a pack of cigarettes and a blunt, and kick back all day with the homies, while my mom thought I was at a friend's house.

I look back and wonder, about kicking it with the homies was cool, 'cause no one told me about the part of getting jumped, shot at and going to jail, I found that out later in life.

-Convict

From The Beat: Stealing from your own mom was shady. Have you apologize to her? You should. One thing is having your own money to buy your own shhh, and support your own habits. We hope you learned something while you've been in here. You found out that there is more to it than just "kicking it" when you're with your homies, huh? So is it worth getting shot at, going to jail, to just kick with the homies? We think not, and we know you know this now.

Taking It To The Head

I'm tired of all these people telling me what to do
Lecturing me and shhhh and telling me I'm a fool
But deep down inside I feel caged up like animals in the zoo

If you look at me too long expect to here a boo
When I'm getting lectured if your lucky it'll go through
Unless I'm in school I'll let the teachers teach me something new

On the outs I got parents and teachers on my case
And in here it feels like I'm steady fightin' with judge, ok
Every time I go to jail he says the same thing detained
Let's lock him up and throw away the key

Can't you see

I'm taking all this lecturing to the head
It gets rough at night tossin' turning tryin' to go to bed
But all I can seem to hear is what my parents seem to said

Watch out Richard I wouldn't want you catching lead.

-Richard

From The Beat: You shouldn't get tired of people lecturing you, 'cause even though it might sound like they're talking shhhh and being mean, they are doing it because they don't want you going in the wrong direction. Some of the people that are giving you lectures care about you and that's why they are doing it. Sometimes it does get old having people all up in your business but maybe you should take some of that advice. It can only make your situation better. What have you got to lose?

Why Is She Trippin'?

Tell me why my lady is trippin' while I'm in jail. Supposably she went on that Myspace stuff and found some white girl that says, "Free my baby Lil' Los I love you." The thing about this white girl is she's my ex from like 2 years ago. And I haven't spoke to that girl in hella long, she's just on my jock still but my lady thinks that I'm writing her and calling her. But I don't even know her number or address. I don't know why she's tripping but she is I told her not to trip but she does anyway. So now my lady says she was gonna find her and beat her ass. Damn why is she trippin' so damn much off her?

-Lil' Los

From The Beat: She's tripping because she's jealous. Maybe you shouldn't be advertising yourself on the Internet all like that. Obviously, your ex girl friend is stalking you and is probably trying to mess up your relationship with your girl. Tell you girl to chill out, because she could find herself locked up too.

My Life

I started to try and fit in at the age of my 9-10
smoking weed, cigarettes and drinking
but never really in a gang.

That was when my mom and step dad started breaking
up

then I found out he smoked pot.

Then mom went to rehab for Vicodin pills

I went to live with my dad and step mom.

Then I was doing good in school

And it all went down hill,

it just got harder

more pressure about smoking weed

when I stopped like two months ago.

All my friends smoke weed and around me but I never
went back.

I smoke cigarettes and drink sometimes

but I am going to stop all that bad stuff when I get out in
a couple days.

I am going to do good when I get out and stay out here
for sure.

-Chuckey

From The Beat: We hope you stay true to what you said, because when you get out you will be facing the same kind of pressure as before. It's not gonna get any easier. Focus on your school and try climbing up hill again. Don't slip up, but if you fall just get back up. If you find yourself in a hole there is no point in digging a deeper hole. Try to climb out of it.

What I've Learned

What's up with the hood?

I'm doin' cool maintaining,

what I learned from my mistakes

is mainly don't nobody really be in your corner.

As for me my family is there for me,

my parents is in my corner.

But what I learned is don't nobody really care about you.

You might have 1 or 2 potnas, that's it.

You can't depend on nobody else to help you with
nothing.

Another thing I've learned is the mistakes you made
you would be an idiot to make the same mistake

and expect a different outcome.

You learn from your mistakes,

I've also learned forget everybody.

-Roland

From The Beat: You are absolutely right, you can't keep expecting different outcomes if you repeat the same mistakes over and over. Forget everybody, man it's time to do you. Time for you to get up out and stay out so you can spend time with the real folks that's in your corner.

Loss Of Innocence

Yea it seem like I was a young boy yesterday, the innocent quiet boy. I always did my dirt on the under and smiled in everybody face. When I was young I still played sports and went to school. Then I came to a point where I just said screw it and didn't start caring what people found out what I was doin'. Then things really started getting worser as I got older. I really don't know why it got worse but it did.

If I could go back and really live my childhood I will, 'cause now I'm sittin in an adult situation but I'm still a minor.

-Keith

From The Beat: Sometimes we want to walk before we crawl. Things happen and we think we adults. You got yourself in a tight situation. But remember that it ain't the end. Deal with the consequences and learn from your mistakes. You can't go back in time but you can focus on your future.

T.B. And B.J. Speech

T.B. "When did you 1st learn of The Beat?"

B.J. "When I first got locked up when I was 11."

T.B. "What got you here at 11?"

B.J. "Shhh, I was robbing people and breaking into hella cars and got caught up by stealing a car trying to get back to my area."

T.B. "How long were you in the hall that time?"

B.J. "I was in for two months and two weeks, but I was in San Jose (Santa Clara) County."

T.B. "When were you next locked up?"

B.J. "Man I want to talk about some females not this petty ass shhh."

T.B. "How many females in this unit?"

B.J. "No females in the damn unit!"

T.B. "Then we need to talk about your plan to stay out. What is it?"

B.J. "To get a job and be with a female all day."

T.B. "So you'll be working nights?"

B.J. "Now I'm just go come home for lunch and after work to her."

T.B. "So you motivation is clean money, love, and freedom. How many times you been in here?"

B.J. "You can say it like that. But I say all I need is, M-P-R.= money, power, respect, and I been here 11-12 times."

-Tb and Bj

From The Beat: Your plan to stay out sounds OK. A job would keep you occupied, but why do you need power? We thought you wanted to stay out of jail? Sounds like you want to keep coming back?



Dad's Words

I've been lectured through out my life. The ones that hit me the hardest are my dad's. You know it when you sit up there and you scared. I was so nervous I was sweating under my arms. He would always lecture about what he had to go through in his past and putting in present time that was my life.

I was in self-denial a lot during the lectures because I would always deny what my dad said. But I was really the one in the wrong.

-Joshua

From The Beat: That happens to a lot of us. We don't want to admit that we did anything wrong 'cause we always thinking we're right. But once you wake up and smell the coffee you start to realize what's real. Your dad just wants to help you out. He doesn't want to see you make bad decisions. The message, learn from your mistakes and don't repeat them!

Stand Up For Something

What's up with The Beat? Me? Could be better. But there is someone out there who has it worse off than me. Probably yesterday, today or tomorrow, there is someone out there doing worse than me, weather it's bills, street drama, baby mama drama, county, penitentiary or fed time — or worse, getting killed!

You gotta keep ya head up and stand up for something or you'll fall for everything and anything. Me, I go hard 'cause I damn sho ain't went home yet. But shhh, like I said, it someone out there doing worse than me.

-Dot

From The Beat: Does it make you want to do anything differently when you look around and see people worse off than you? No, you haven't gone home yet, but what are your plans for when you do go home? What changes will you make so that you can stay there?

Taking Advantage Of Glen Mills

What's up wit The Beat? It's about time I get ready to leave. I'm going to Glen Mills. I recommended it. I want to go there so I can get away from a few things for a while and so I can get my diploma. I want to have opportunities. And Glen Mills will provide that for me. I'll write to y'all so y'all can send me The Beat Within. Well, wish me the best. Peace

-Lil' Roach

From The Beat: You know we do wish you the best. We also hope you follow through on the promise to write us from Glen Mills and spit some knowledge our way. We'll publish what you write and send you the magazine. It's clear to us that you are ready for the next stage of your life, ready to take the difficult step into the unknown to make your life better. We are looking forward to the first letter we receive from you... Good luck!

Things I Don't Understand

I don't understand why ninjas act so damn hard and talk so much shhh and don't want to throw 'em wit' yo' boi. Man, you know me, a looney in this place, man. An' ah don't understand why these ninjas be tryin' to mug me hella hard an shhh, an' when it comes to beefin', they don't want it, an I don't understand why these square-ass ninjas always sayin' they wit the shhh but ain't even from where they claim, an ah don't understand why these putt butts always say they ain't in tha beef when they by themselves because they scared... But these are things I don't understand. I'm out Beat.

-Na-Na F Holly

From The Beat: And what we don't understand is why someone who has such contempt for his "house mates" would allow a cold system to put him in their house...

Forgiveness

It's hard for me to tell my mom to forgive me for all the things I have put her through because I know that ain't enough. My mom tells me to stop gang banging, but I know that ain't gone happen 'cause my heart is in da game. I go to my cell just tryin' to go to sleep, but I wake up in da middle of the night 'cause it's hard thinking that my mama is crying, and I ain't there to tell her it's alright. But you know I ain't gone say I'ma change 'cause I got love for violence so I'ma do what I gotta do.

-Yung Roach

From The Beat: Don't you see that even if you were there to tell your mother it's all right, those words would not bring her comfort knowing that you made the choice of violence and streets over her, the very choice that is causing her to cry. We admire your honest, Yung Roach, but if you're truly honest, you'll have to admit that leaving your mama in tears is just one of the consequences of your choices.

My Plans

When I go back to the house I'ma go to college and get a job. I'm gonna do as much as possible to stay outta trouble. All I wanna do is be with my family stay free and live a decent life.

-Lil' Spitta

From The Beat: Your goals are achievable and worth pursuing. By all means, stay free and live a decent life.

Going Hard In The Paint

What's up with The Beat? Me, same ol' same ol' shhh. Still the same being locked down. Nothing really change. Some days harder than others, but shhh till basically the same. We've all been through our share of hardship and pain, some greater than others, but the question is, is there someone out there who has it worse off than me?

Honestly, I know there's someone out there worse off than me. Someone probably got life in the "PEN" right now, and they head is up high knowing that it make me go harder in the paint so that I don't end up like them. Not saying that they're bad or anything, but they chose a certain life style that they now have to pay the price.

The phrase "going hard in the paint" doesn't mean playing basketball, because life is not a game. What I mean by going hard in the paint is staying focus on the streets, like going to school and everything, getting the right education so I can feed my seed. I'm here knowing I'm going to get out, so I just stay patient and also humble, although I feel like a animal time to time due to the fact that I'm caged up like one.

-Da Lazy Boi

From The Beat: Does this mean that when you get out of here you will be going to school and not cutting? That's easier said (when you're locked up) than done (when you're free), but it's the most important choice you could make. We sure hope you keep this promise.

The Heart

Pain! You feel it everywhere, especially the heart. Love brings you far — family, girlfriends, friends. If you love them, you'll try to help them. If they love you, they'll try to help you. If you find the right people to help you, it's a better chance you not coming back 'cause you have help from other people who love you.

Love goes far farther than being in unit 3. That's where I'm at, not 'cause people don't love me, 'cause I don't accept it. I love people. I try to help them and some people try to help me, but its not enough 'cause I'm here. So accept it when you can.

-Quan

From The Beat: Thank you for writing seriously. We appreciate it. We agree with you that it is very important to find the right people to get help from. It can make a big difference in your future. What about you, Quan? Who do you expect to get help from, and who are you getting help from now?

The Third World

I know it's people worst off than me because it's a lot of third world countries, and they out there living messed up — no electricity and plumbing. We out here with messed up situations, but we are rich compared to them. And while some people act like we livin' in poverty, dis shhh ain't shhh. We livin' in la la land. But I'm go get at you in a min.

-Poon.G

From The Beat: It's true. How did you learn these things about the third world? Are you thinking of any particular countries? Isn't it strange the things we take for granted when we have so much?

Thoughts Of You

It's been very hard the last couple of days
But I know I can get through it if I just pray
You been on my mind since I been away from you
An' you already know I fiend for you

I miss yo' touch
I miss da way we made love
You are my heart
You had me from the start

I didn't know where I would be w/out you
That's why I have so much love to you
You help me believe in myself
An' for dat we will have so much wealth

Words can't describe how I feel for
But through action will show you da truth
I will keep you happy at all times
'Cause you are my sunshine

You already know I'm here for you, off top
An' together we will rise to da top

We can get higher than it seems
'Cause we have more than two players on our team
So I'ma play my part to fulfill our dream

-Unsigned

From The Beat: Keep ya' head up. Take it day by day. We know it can be hard being away from your significant other, so you have to concentrate to keep your head straight. Focus on how you can stop yourself from coming back to these facilities, so that you won't be writing these pieces.

Listen To Your Elders

What's wit da Beat? It's young Des-Mack ya dig. As young people we forever getting lectured but don't wanna listen. I was always like dat until one day at Omega I really woke up and started paying attention.

I done a lot of things in my life that most people haven't. So all I'm saying is if you gone do what you do, at least listen to what the OG's say when they lecture you.

All right, y'all I'm outie. Keep y'all head up!

-Des- M

From The Beat: We're dying to know... What did you hear at Omega that made you open your ears and listen?

Silence

Silence, it screams to me from a distant irrelevancy
Probably feeding something meant to be
What does this mean to you
Tell me what you can do, while colorfully signifying
something new
Using all out hue

For the sky has depleted the supply
It's all to be used to prove to you as you fall
Now slowing your pace, quickly losing the race
Twirling into spark to find a suitable place
Riots, frequently collaborating frequencies
Telling me it wants to freek with me
Immediately containing individuality or
Spotlessly clean parenthesis.

-Fidgitt

From The Beat: When we read this great poem, it makes us think that you are in love with the sound of words! So are we! What inspired you to write it? Does the "word play" describe emotions you are feeling inside?

Loss Of Innocence

My, it seems like yesterday when I was in the house. I don't know what a gun was. I used to see them on TV, but now it's real life. Ninjas make shhh hard for young ones. So that what change ninja's mind. The streets, that's what it is. That's what it was for me. That how it is.

-T-Bang

From The Beat: We don't know what to tell you except the straightforward message that guns kill! Stay away from them if you can.

Loss Of Innocence

I feel my life got so complicated when I first went to a group home. I gave up hope and started to hang around the wrong crowd of people. I felt that was the only way to go. I started to get bad habits such as selling drugs and getting myself into conflicts with other people.

But now when I think back, I wish I could've made a better decision or seen someone for help. Me personally would like to get myself out of this life, but I've done so much stuff on the street I can't. Now I have to live with the life that I made for myself when I was younger.

When I see all my fellow black brothers out on the street doing the same thing I'm doing, it hurts me because a lot of those brothers have the family/resources to be a good person. From ya boy.

-Twaney M

From The Beat: There's a piece missing from your description of how things went wrong for you, and that's how you got to the group home to begin with. Also, we really want to seek out some of the homies who have left the life. Many were in it much deeper than you. It can be done. It only requires courage. Do you have that?

I've Been Through It All

What's up Beat? It's J-pop from the block. I done seen a lot of things — a jail cell at the age of eleven. I done seen guns, drugs, hookers, 'ho'es, pimps, drug dealers, gangsters, dope fiends, square-ass marks. I've been zoning off them pills leaning off that bo! Higher than some clouds.

I stopped going to school in the 5th grade. I done sold ice to an Eskimo, and I got a whole life ahead of me. Who knows what will happen next?

-J-Pop

From The Beat: You've definitely experienced far more than most your age. And, while nobody knows for sure what will happen next, some choices you make lead in one direction and some in another. So, you can make intelligent guesses about what will happen next. Since only you know your future plans (assuming you have plans), only you can guess intelligently about what will happen next.

RIP To Da Homie Nitro

Man, what's good wit' da Beat? Dis dat ninja Na-Na F Holly again. I'm saying why they had to do dude like dat? I'm not feelin' dat. They killed tha homie Nitro. He was cool as hell, man. He didn't deserve to die, but it was his time to go. If you say you in tha beef you got to go some day. You ain't gone live forever. But Nitro was a close friend to many ninjas, an' dem grimy-ass ninjas had to hit him. Ah don't blame 'em but RIP to tha homie Nitro. Peace out Beat.

-Na-Na F Holly

From The Beat: As sorry as we are that your homie lost his life so young, we hate the message that you are trying to deliver with this piece, as if life is so casual a gift that time does not matter. (We didn't print your second RIP piece because it was not much more than a shout out.) If you believed in God, and we don't know if you do or not, this would be like spitting in the Creator's face! To make it seem all right that teenagers are killing teenagers (and almost all within the same race) truly makes us sick. If you don't blame "them" for killing your friend, who do you blame?

Stop Coming Here

I know people got it worse than lots of us here. People down for murder, all the shhh, and people got it way worse. Man, I know. I know I ain't here for nottin', and people go down for little shhh, and yeah, people — kids, women, children — should stop coming here. I don't know, but I'm going to take this as an experience.

-James

From The Beat: This is advice we hope you can apply to yourself, James. This is no place to be, so stop coming here!

Only Temporary

What's up Beat? Still here. I thought I was gonna be gone a long time ago. I know I haven't been here as long as some people, but I can't be locked up right now. Too much is goin' on.

The way I learned to look at things in here is think positive. I can't do anything but think in here. I just recently got to speak to my mom after about two-three months. Even though she was upset that I got here, she's my mom and love overpowers anger. She's behind me 100% though.

I know this is temporary and I'm gonna be out some time and that's motivation for me. So everyone, stay up.

-Muslim Warrior

From The Beat: Yes, love overpowers anger, so we hope you let your love for your family quell your own anger about your situation until you are back with your family where you belong.

Love Is Pain

Damn, love is pain

Damn, I thought you were my true love

But I thought wrong

I thought you were really gonna be there

But you weren't and never will be

You played me but I played you worst

You had the first laugh

I had the last

It's cool, though, at least I kept my shhh real

And you couldn't even keep it real

You played with my mind

I played with your heart

It's good through, I stayed with the best

You stayed with the worst

It's so funny though how you couldn't even keep

Yo' game up

'Cause you would always get caught

At least I'm happy

The more you try an' try, but you just can't be happy

It's good though, I stay strong and always keep my head up

-Monstrita

From The Beat: Love is pain, but that doesn't mean that you have to put up with it. It's clear that he hurt you (and then you hurt him), so move on and get yourself some one worth it. You don't need to be playing with anybody's heart as he shouldn't be playing with your mind. Time to move on.

Thank You

What's good with The Beat? I just want to thank my mom. My mom is the best thing in my life. She's like a super woman. She has five kids and she still have time to come see me all the time. I want to thank her for that and just say I love her with all my heart.

-Acie

From The Beat: We hope you get to show this to your mom soon.

Freedom

Freedom is important. Freedom is important because without freedom you may have nothing but life. Your family may give up on you when you're incarcerated. While you are incarcerated you will not get any day back you spend locked up

-Za- Fe

From The Beat: Yes, freedom is important. So, what are you going to do (and what are you not going to do) in order to hold onto yours once you leave here?

Missing My Baby

Man, I'm going crazy in here

Just missin' you, thinkin' bout all da

Lil' things we do, I don't know this feeling

Well, I know I'm in love

Floating higher than the clouds

Yeah, I'm above

Just hearing yo' voice

Make me wish I didn't make dat choice

Lookin' at my arm

Just seeing yo' name

I swear got me going insane

Lickin' my lips, feeling yours

Wishing we could kiss

I swear baby

Everything about you I miss

Man I need you here

Right beside me right now

It's crazy how we fell in love

Sometimes I ask myself now

I don't know but it make me think wow

I'm gone and you gone

No communication not even on da phone

I swear I'm goin' crazy

'Cause I'm missing my baby.

-Tyshawn

From The Beat: That's a sweet love poem. Since you wish you "hadn't made that choice" (that gave the system the power to separate the two of you), what different choices do you see yourself making in the future?

Thoughts

Damn, if you knew what my thoughts were

If you knew what they're thinking

My thoughts are very strong sometimes

They feel anger even though sometimes

They're very emotional:

they wish they can just pop out.

Sometimes they wanna yell

Sometimes they wanna go insane

-Monstrita

From The Beat: It's good that you are expressing your thoughts on paper. Write down whatever you need to get off your chest. If you wanna yell, then yell. If you wanna cry, then cry. Let 'em pour out. You can't keep your thoughts and feelings all bottled up inside you or they just might explode.

Sittin' And Waitin'

I been here for 145 days. Now, I am just waitin' to get on the plane to Philly. But it's a lot of paper work that has to be done and that is why it is taking a long time to leave. I am just waitin' on my family visit and my last day here.

-Beans

From The Beat: We wish you had spent this hour giving us some of your thoughts. In any case, good luck, and write us when you get there.

I'm a Boss... You know What I Mean

I'm a Boss and 'ey,
you know what I mean
I'm Boss — someone who gets money and ain't no
snitch

That's me!

I'm bossy

Someone who go to school,
Who serve God
And tells you to wipe me down
That's me!

I'm Bossy

Someone dat rock wit rock
And hop, skip, petty bops
'Cause my status is so sick

I don't do drugs and I
still the bee-la-jit,
That's me

I'm bossy

And I take care of my family
And ride and die wit my lil' sis
You know I'm talking about you if you read this
So play the game
And beat the street thang
That's me

I'm bossy

And I bet you ain't neva
Met someone like this
I'm one of a kind
I'm the green goblin and AKA
The Penn toy-
Come Play with me
'Cause I'm the shhh.
Peace out.

-Mercedes

From The Beat: We don't know a lot of bosses who take orders about when to sleep when to eat, when to talk, what to wear, etc. So, what's your definition of a Boss? We are very curious to know.



Worse Off Than You

The person who I know that gots it worse off than me is my two cousins. My younger cousin (11) and my older cousin (17), both can't walk. I don't know why they can't walk, they were born like that. I feel bad for them 'cause I can do a lot of things they can't do.

They both live with me. They live with me ever since I was three months old. I seen my auntie go through hella shhh, and I feel bad for her. Sometimes I wished me and my cousins switch bodies so they can know how it feels to walk.

-Alfy

From The Beat: Does their situation make you appreciate what you have more? What do you think they would learn if they could experience walking? What do you think you would learn if you could experience their paralysis?

Trying To Be A Better Man

Man, as I been in this jail seein' what's goin' out there, my cousin got killed on Nov 2. 2007 and I had thoughts of goin' crazy on my enemies. But I read the Bible and God told me to love my enemy. So I'm just tryin' to better myself. And get on the right track.

RIP Sir Marcus Aking Bibbs

-Fed-Up Beam

From The Beat: We changed your title because "we all we got" is nothing more than a cliché. It's not really true when you think about it — especially if you take wisdom and strength from the Bible. We admire you for not taking the easy way.

Starting Over

Man, it seems like I'm not never go get out. The days go by fast, but when I'm in that cell, that shhh ain't good at all. But when get out, I'm go start over. That mean get a job an' shhh, play football or something.

-Mike

From The Beat: If you really plan to start over, Mike, you need a better plan. These are good goals (getting a job, playing football), but without a plan, they'll remain just words on a page. The foundation of any good plan should be a good education. Go to school!

Till We Touchdown

Till we touchdown I'ma hold it down. I remember we was all on da run, just doin' what real ninjas do, on one, havin' hella fun. 'Cause we knew when we got caught, we had to do time. Runnin' around not givin' a damn. It seemed like yesterday we was ridin' in da magnum slappin' plies, Lil' Boosie and Webbie smokin', drinkin' and poppin' all da shhh. On da block holdin' it down like big homies.

But now gotta do dis time...

-Boog Swella

From The Beat: There are two reasons why we took out the last few sentences. First, it read like a threat and a series of shout outs. And second, we like the way this piece ends now. Those six words say much more than the sentences you added on. Our fear is that, unless you decide that some changes are in order, you will be writing those same six words over and over...

Davo

Someone who is in a worse position than me who I personally know is my big brother who is lookin' at 120 years in prison. So I have more appreciation for some of the things that I have

-Tito L.

From The Beat: Have you spoken to him? How does he deal with knowing he might never get out of prison? How does that fact affect the decisions that lie ahead of you?

Seein' Family From Behind Glass

What's going on? This be the real Vago, not the fake, coming at you! They try to send me by the lake, where the doors are steal, where I'm going to be gone for a long time because I was on the grind tryin' to get it. Gangbangin' to the max.

Now I'm seein' my family from the glass. I should I should have been in class, with not them foes. But I got wrap for bustin' that dude who was from the other side... Now can never walk again. It's coo' because I did it for the "cause."

Now I'm here killin' time. That's it. I'm out, ya dig.

-The Real Vago

From The Beat: You know, Vago, we took some of your piece out because there is no way we justify killing and we won't allow you to make light of it. "The dude from the other side" was just a dude, and the "sides" are all created by people in a stupid game where some children end up dead and others enslaved! But it's cool, though, 'cause y'all do it for "the cause."

I Want To Be Different

Seem like yesterday I was a young ninja. Now I up in here and I cannot get out. Beefing with ninja over stupid-ass shhh. Now I doing bad thing to people. Now I in jail. I want to be a different and to go to school. It is too late now. Now I do not know what to do.

-Kevin

From The Beat: Of course it is not too late, Kevin. It is only too late if you don't want to change. But you wrote that you want to be different, so you can be different. If it's "stupid-ass shhh," walk away, 'cause this is not worth it.

Stay Solid

What's good wit' The Beat? I'm doing coo' up here at the Ranch. Y'all know yo' boy, Tha Dude, keeping it solid up here, no doubt. Tryin' to stay sane up here at this crazy ass Ranch. They makin' new rules up here, tryin' to make it harder to get home. Forget this Ranch.

I'm ready to get back to these streets so I can do my thang. Tired of being around these soft ass ninjas, but it's not my job to punk up on these soft ass ninjas. I don't punk people--it's not my style. I let ninjas be soft if they wanna be soft.

I hope y'all type this, Beat. But if y'all don't, well, I guess I'm go have to step my writing game up.

-Tha Dude

From The Beat: What makes someone down at the Ranch soft and/or not soft, as in hard? Can you explain the difference? You're wise to let people just be who they are, and leave them alone, but what about you? What makes you not so soft? How are you managing with the new rules? What are they?

Adult Responsibilities

I lost my innocence when I was very young having to be and act like a man and having to take care of my younger brother really. I also had to be my brother's keeper and sister. I mean I had to protect my sister. I mean I'm overprotective about my sister. So I guess I started getting in trouble and seriously start breaking 'cause I had to take care of my auntie and little brother when my sister wasn't there! So there's my story.

I'm out Beat!

-G

From The Beat: So, because you had to take care of your younger brother and sister when you were still a child yourself, you did things that led the system to take you away from your brother and sister! There must be a better way to take care of them, because what they need the most is their brother, at home with them, guiding them to do right.

Gettin' Out

Getting out is the hardest thing I've tried to do. I feel like a caged animal because they treat you like shhh. You could never do what you want. You gotta get up when they tell you to. Then, when you go to the court, they keep you here. I just want to get out.

-Mark

From The Beat: You will get out, Mark. But getting out's the easy part. What are you going to do (or stop doing) when you get out so that you never have to get out again?



Lecturer

Lecturers! To be honest, I hate it when someone tries and lecture me, because to me, they're just tellin' me I'm messin' up when I already know. That's why I hate lectures fo' real fo' real. But not all lectures I hate. I hate it when someone tries to fake like they have been in our position when they really haven't and try to compare their lives with mines, ya digs?

But the lectures my counselor Coogler gives us about the streets and stuff, I can sit there and listen ta that 'cause he don't compare or any of that ta the confo. It's just something I like about his words that makes me sit still and just listen ('cause I already can't sit down through no regular lecture). But he keeps it real. That's what it is. That's what I like 'bout his lectures.

But that's how I feel 'bout lectures, man.

-JR Rhyda

From The Beat: It's good that you have a counselor who keeps it real with and who you can listen to and learn from. Can you ever imagine yourself in the role of the lecturer, spitting knowledge to children who think they know about the world?

Davey D Talks About His 'Hood, The New Gang-Related Injunctions, And Young People Going To War In Iraq

DD: I wanna talk about my 'hood.

TBW: Okay, why don't you tell The Beat, without straight representing, what's so special about your neighborhood.

DD: It's what the world needs.

TBW: In what way is your neighborhood what the world needs?

DD: The world needs a better President, because he makin' the wrong suggestions. You can be tried as an adult at the age of fourteen and they're building more juvenile halls and everybody gonna be locked up behind cages, like animals. He's a chump. He keeps getting all these facilities all over the world, puttin' all this money and not puttin' all this money into (our communities.)

TBW: So your neighborhood, like other ones, is suffering because there's no money budgeted to improve them, keep them clean and healthy, and decent to live in?

DD: Yeah. In Fillmore they're making us feel like

The Boys and Girls Club in Hunters Point is closed.

TBW: That's ashame. What else is it like for your homies and you, where you live?

DD: Just for bein' black on a Friday night, you get pulled over. On Tuesday and Thursday the police harass all of the blacks in every 'hood, in Fillmore. The mayor put so many police on the streets, but in Hunters Point and Fillmore, if somebody get killed, the police take several hours to get

there.

TBW: So you think, when the police know someone who lives in those areas is wounded, the police would rather let them die?

DD: Yeah.

TBW: So you don't feel safer from the injunctions restricting so-called gang related kids from those three areas (the Mission, Eddy Street, Hunters Point)? You're just getting more harassment?

DD: Yeah, but the President, he say how much he love America, but he sending innocent citizens to Iraq and they just die. It's like saying they killed an innocent bystander.

TBW: You know, these young people signed up for the military, they weren't drafted. They weren't forced to go, so maybe they're not exactly innocent bystanders in Iraq.

DD: I don't think they signed up—I think a lot of them had criminal records and the President sent someone to pick them up and sent them to Iraq, to get killed. They didn't have no choice. When he says he wanna help Americans, he doesn't wanna help. He just wants his money.

-Davey D

From The Beat: You've obviously thought a lot about your wars in the streets and how young men and women your age are going off to war in Iraq. Do you see any correlation between them? It may be true that not everyone, including some police, understands your wars over blocks against your neighbors, and get cynical and slow when someone gets wounded or killed in another battle in your streets. But since you realize that, why don't you do everything you can to stop those wars? Do you think the murders in your streets are just as sad, tragic, and futile as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? If you think your wars are more personal, and somehow nobler, why don't you write an essay or poem about why you think that? Use these pages to teach!!

I'm On My Way Home

TBW: Hi, Lloyd. It's good to see you at our workshop. What's on your mind? What would you like to be interviewed about?

L: I'm on my way home.

TBW: When do you get to go home?

L: December 27th.

TBW: Two days after Christmas. What a great Christmas present for you! How do you feel about going home?

L: It feel good.

TBW: What are you going to do as soon as you get home?

L: Get back in school, get a job, complete my probation, spend time with my family.

TBW: Where do you go to school?

L: Downtown High.

TBW: What do you like best about school?

L: There's a lot of challenges. I like school—I like math work. It's kinda hard. I'm taking Algebra III. I'm gonna take geometry. I kinda lost it for a minute, 'cause I was outta school, but now I'm back.

TBW: What kind of job do you want, when you're home again?

L: I wouldn't mind working at a recreation center. I play sports, so I wouldn't mind working there, because I play basketball myself and I could shoot around with the kids.

TBW: Do you teach the little kids how to play basketball?

L: Yeah. I teach the lil' kids on the block when I'm passin' by if they whoopin' it up, but it's not an every day thing.

TBW: Would you like to be a basketball coach?

L: No. I'd like to play professional basketball.

TBW: Do you practice? Take it seriously, on the outs?

L: I be confused, though, 'cause I like football, too. I'm a have to decide seriously if I wanna go professional.

TBW: Did you play either sport, basketball or football, in high school?

L: No. I played in recreation, but not in high school, because I messed up and came to juvenile, got in the system.

TBW: So you'd really have to hustle a lot to get in shape to play in college, right?

L: I want to do sports, counseling, too. I do a little work out to

stay in shape, do exercises, go to the weight room (at the Ranch.)

TBW: What else are you gonna do or not do any more, when you get out?

L: I don't know. I ain't gonna make no promises that I'm gonna try to do something good, like goin' to school. Before I came here, I wasn't goin' to school because I was on the run.

TBW: How long have you been out of school?

L: Since 2004 I've been in school, but it's been in juvenile school.

TBW: So if you weren't incarcerated, you wouldn't be going to school, before, when you were free?

L: Yeah.

TBW: Are you excited about going back to school on the outs?

L: Yeah.

TBW: What excites you the most about going home?

L: Shhh, I haven't been free since 2003. I ran from all my group homes. I won't be on the run no more. I get to go home. I live with my pops, my sister.

TBW: Will they be happy to have you home?

L: Yeah, they stuck with me the whole time I was gone.

TBW: What are you going to do for fun, when you're free?

L: Spend time with my girl, my wifey; my dad; my great grandmother. I'm gonna live with my dad. I used to live with my moms, but I don't like where she live. I used to live with my great grandmother, but now I'm gonna live with my dad.

TBW: Is there anything you'd like to add to your interview?

L: To all locked up right now—I'm gon' keep it lit for y'all when I touch down.

-Lloyd

From The Beat: You have a fresh, good attitude about what you want for your life when you're free again, but if you don't make up your mind that you're not going to mess up again and go back to juvy, no matter what, you might be in danger of slipping, thinking you can live the life you were living before you went to juvy, but just get away with whatever, and, boom! There you are back at the Ranch, or worse. Do you believe you can make it on the outs by going to school, getting a job maybe working with little kids playing sports? What do you think will be your biggest obstacles? How will you work with them?

"Getting Out"

What's good with it beat?
Just coming thru to tell everybody
I'm getting out on the 7th and I ain't
coming back. I gotta do good because I
don't want to see any of my 'lil sisters
ending up in here. When I get out
Ima do my thing. I know I
messed up with that one gangsta
homegirl I look up to, but
I'm stepping my stuff up and staying
solid and trying to get her love
and respect back for this
'lil homie right here.

-Lil' Nessa

From The Beat: OK, you know how you messed up, so you know what not to do. Don't come back.

Piece Of Mind

Q-onda Beat and Beat readers. It's Jessica chillin', maintaining a solid composure. Ain't really feeling these topics so here's some of this Indian's insightful thoughts.

I've been here for six and half months just doing dead time. I ain't really trippin' though. I should be getting out soon. But to all my gentes, you'll be hearing from me. Pues I can't stand when people have their power trips. I just laugh because they don't know who they're messing with. I ain't trying to sound all crazy, but it's the truth. I can really mess someone's life up. But I got to go to my only brothers, my chignons, and my Latinos. Stay up. Maintain a solid composure!! Much love.

-Jessica

From The Beat: If you don't like power trips, then don't be doing your own. Stay humble. And stay out of trouble. We don't want to see you doing even more 'dead time'.

Getting Out

What up Beat. It's that one and only Bernadette. Well I'm getting out on Sunday - going home, off probation. Damn, I can't wait.

It's a trip. I've been in and out since I was a very young teen. Now I'm eighteen. Damn, time flies by. But anyways, I'm gone for good.

Just wanted to tell all to stay up and solid. Do your time or whatever program it is they give you. I'll be thinking of you all. I'll miss you guys, too. Also, thanks Beat for giving me the time to express my feelings. Well I got to go. To all - stay up.

-Travi

From The Beat: Yes, time has wings and it's always flying. Don't waste it.

"Finally Leaving"

Hey Beat, this your girl Baybe-G dropping in a couple of lines for y'all to read. Well anyway, yesterday was Halloween and my PO came thru to see me. She told me that she finally got my paper work in her hands so now she said that for sure I'm leaving on Monday. So I'm hella happy. I've been up in this piece for five months already and I'm ready to get out and change, but still party like a rock star. So Beat, with that I'm out. Much love and respect. Your girl.

-Baybe-G

From The Beat: Happy trails Baybe-G. We'll miss you, but we don't want you coming back to say hi. Write to us.

That Wild Animal

If I could be a animal I would be a untamed gorilla. The reason I say that is because a gorilla reminds me of myself, plus, I like bananas, if you know what I mean. Also my block is like the zoo, ya dig!!!

-Gully Bub

From The Beat: One of the saddest things we know is that wild gorillas are a highly endangered species. They are intelligent and gentle giants and they are being exterminated by ignorant humans. Read up on it Gully. It will make you sick, maybe sick enough to raise your voice in protest.

In The Past Years

Hey what up Beat! It's me Changa. Looks like once again I'm just chillin' here in this unit.

Well, in the past six years that I've been in the system I've put my parents through a whole lot.

I first started getting locked up when I was thirteen years old. Now I'm eighteen years of age, and still doing the same shhhh. It gets kinda boring after a couple of years. Just running the streets, getting drunk and chilling with the homies. I'm through with getting drunk and high, but I'll never stop my game.

Now I'm just working on getting my shhhh together to make my parents proud. I have my own car, a Camaro, and by the time I get out I'll have my own apartment. I'm still waiting for my O.T's so I can get a job, but that's not until January. And then I'll just have two more months for me to get out with no probation. W

ell, that's all I have for now - until next time. Much love to my friends. As for everyone else, take care, stay solid like a brick wall.

-Changa

From The Beat: Six years is enough. We hope you have a support system out there to help you stay on your feet. You need a friend or two who will listen when you need to talk. It can be anyone who will sit and listen and not make judgments. Do you have someone like that? If not, be on the lookout. And remember, writing your thoughts and feelings down on paper is almost as good as having a friendly ear. So try keeping a journal. Remember to write in it when times get challenging. It will be your own personal Beat Within. Good luck to you from all of us at The Beat.

Unknown

The desperation I feel is when they give me an option like to go to a group home, where I'd run away the next day, because I've been up in here for so long. I'd take the easy way out - to get some gloats, smoke, and chill with the homies. I'm out.

-JRoc

From The Beat: We understand that it doesn't feel like much of an option, but is it, or is it not, better than being locked up? Is it, or is it not, a test to see if you have the willpower to do what you must do to earn a place in the free world? Get real. Accept the challenge. Make yourself proud.

If

If I could be an animal I would be an eagle.

I would be an eagle because they are really strong.

They hunt for themselves.

They do everything for themselves and that's how I am.

I feed myself and I do everything for myself.

An eagle is a very strong animal and that's how I consider myself

- a very strong person. An eagle goes by its own rules.

-Mely

From The Beat: Yes, eagles fly by eagle rules. They don't fly into walls. They don't put things into their bodies that make them sick. They take care of themselves quire well. So, by all means - be an eagle.

Untitled

Well dang I feel so tired of
being in here. I used to
blame my mom but
I realize everything I
do is all on me. I caused
my mom pain and I
caused her to hurt.
And at the same time I
caused myself and my
family to hurt. Especially,
I hurt my man. I make myself
look as if I don't care for
him. It's like I'm telling him
I'd rather be in here, but
I don't, and when I get out I'll
prove it to him and my family,
and our future baby. I'm two months
pregnant and I'm in love with my man.
I miss him a lot and I'll
be out soon, so I'll see him soon.

-Gary's Lady

From The Beat: You have to be your own lady first. Do what will make you truly happy, and then the people you love will be happy, too - for you, and for themselves. You owe your unborn baby peace and happiness, but to provide that, you must take good care of yourself.

Unknown Topic

What's up Beat? It's me, Destiny, once again, from Gilroy. Well, I've been locked up for awhile - all bad. Well, I'm gonna get out on December 27, 07. I feel bad because I have a man and he's gonna be out there for 2 months, hopefully waiting and being faithful to me. Man, I can't wait for December to come so I can get the heck out of here, go home, do my thirty days on EMP.

To be honest with you Beat.. I don't think I'm gonna last out there. But you know what? Life's a bitch and then you die.! Well, I'm gonna try my hardest to do my program and stay out the system. Because why be behind these four walls when I can be out there with my vato and family?

Well, they sent me up to the honors unit "all bad", but I'm gonna do my time and get out!

-Destiny

From The Beat: You can last out there if you get the help you need. It's nothing but smart to ask for and accept help when you need it. And the people who help you get rewarded when they see you begin to make wise decisions. Everybody feels good when that happens. There are going to be good people involved in any program that you do. Be smart - let them help you learn how to help yourself.

What They Say Makes Sense

I'm always hearing it from these old folks. "Don't do this don't do that and if you do this and that it's gonna happen." I'm tired of hearing it all. Especially when people haven't even been what I'm going through. Shhh, I feel like telling them, 'Shut yo' mouth and get away,' because it really isn't necessary for them to be all up in my grill. But when I actually think about what they say, when I'm up lonely in my room, it makes me feel like a failure because it really makes sense from what they're talking about.

Well, damn, this is my last piece, but I got to end it short. Keep it coo' up in here. To every one who knows me, stay up and be safe. I'm out. One love.

-Chuccey

From The Beat: It's hard for all of us to hear and accept criticism. Listen to your own inner voice when you're up, lonely in your room, because that voice is telling you like it is.

Desperation

Desperation: my desperate situation is that I'm desperate to get out. I want to see my family, and start a family with my future baby on the way. I'm desperate, really desperate. I want to be with my family and my man. I get really angry but it's my fault.

In the past years I caused my mom to hurt and feel pain and she's done nothing but help me. I felt like it is all her fault that I'm in here, but it's not and because it was my fault, I caused her pain and sadness and loneliness. I'm the one that caused everything - no one else but me! Pressure: I've been pressured but I believe I pressure people.

The animal: I choose a monkey because monkeys are loud and move around a lot. Sometimes they're quite out going, funny, smart, and they love bananas.

-Ruby

From The Beat: When you feel desperate, here's a trick that often works. Sit down and focus on your breathing. Actually follow your breath into your body with your mind's eye. Feel it going into your chest, and down even further. Then follow it out. Do that six or seven times, and we can almost guarantee that it will calm you down. And when you're calm, you can make better choices. And better choices means less desperation. So, give yourself a break. Breathe deeply. Calm yourself, and then act wisely. Remember, you're acting on behalf of your baby, too. You and your baby deserve some peace.

Untitled

Money, money, money, that is what makes the world go around - I'm trying to tell you. The thing that gets me is the things people would do to get it. I would tell you what, but that might be incriminating myself, and we don't want that. When I use to hit licks I was trying to get it. But then ninja start getting over on me, T-House, but I promised myself that I would never go out like that again. I would die before I do.

-T-House

From The Beat: We're not sure what it was you were doing, but there are honorable ways to make a living, and dishonorable ways. When you chose the latter way, you dishonor yourself and those who love you, and you end up in places like the hall. If you don't learn from the experience, you graduate to tougher places. It isn't a game. Get serious. Earn your freedom. Then change your behavior. Have some faith in yourself. You'll learn that love is what really makes the world go round.

In The Past Years

In the past years I've changed a lot. From playing sports, doing good, watching my mom and pops feel hella proud of me - to having middle of the night phone calls from the cops who say:

We've got your daughter in custody. I had never seen my mom cry before, but when she went to pick me up, I saw tears in her eyes. They weren't tears of anger or sadness. They were tears of shame. It hurt me to know she was ashamed of me. Over the years she's been coo with me because she knows this is the way I am. I'm glad she's changed but at the same time she wants me to do good. And I'm just letting her down by doing all the stuff I do. I'm gonna change. She just gotta have faith in me.

-Lil' Nessa

From The Beat: And you have to have faith in yourself. Regaining trust is a gradual thing. It happens through hard work and persistence. If you make a mistake, acknowledge it and start over. In time, you'll feel grat about yourself, and your family will too.

Desperation

This desperation has led me to incarceration.
 Just wanted to make some quick money.
 Now I'm stuck in a cell while days are sunny.
 Just wanted to live on top
 but constantly on the run from a cop.
 The system's all jacked up.
 My mind's so corrupt.
 Never know what I really want to do -
 which way to go.
 Everyone thinks I'm messed up, so
 it's not about you - it's me.
 All I want is to be free.
 I made the mistake.
 I'm doing the best I can for my own sake.

-Fat Gurl

From The Beat: Nice writing. Keep this up and you'll uncorrupt, pronto.

No Place Like Home!

There's no place like home, all in my ear.
 There's no place like home, I wish I were there,
 I would be happy and live without a care.
 There's no place like home in my warm comfy bed.
 There's no place like home and good thoughts in my
 head.
 There's no place like home there with my Mom.
 There's no place like home and in just a couple of months
 I will be there.

-Nacho

From The Beat: Getting home is only the first step. Staying there is what you have to aim for.

Lecturer

Hey Beat, it's yo' boy Damaged Khmer, but I'ma change my Beat name to Buddha. Well I've been good lately. And man have I been lectured hella times before. Mostly by my Mom, but I feel bad about all those times I didn't listen to my Mom. Like before she lectured me and she was screaming. It was to the point where I wanted to hit her and just knock her out. But I thought in my head this is because I know she loves me and all the things she said was right.

So I just walked away and left for my homies, just to smoke some cigarettes and just chill and cool down. It's funny 'cause right before I wrote this I just had a visit from my Mom, and I feel good 'cause she told me to be strong.

Thanks again Beat for letting me write for you guys. It helps so much and peace out. See you guys next week.

-Buddha

From The Beat: We like your name change. Do you think you'll be able to remember how you felt about listening to your mamma when you get out of here?

Young Money

I don't see me as an animal.
 I see other people as snakes.
 Because they all out to get me
 but I be like Santa Claus
 and be coming down in yo' chimney.

-Rothas

From The Beat: And we are the elves of forgiveness. You straighten up and fly right and we'll put a glass of milk and a cookie on your window sill.

If A Dog Could Talk

If I had a dog that could talk I would teach it to open doors. I would snake it out. I would give it Mexican food - mostly pasole. I'd give it a twin size bed to sleep on. I would also teach it how to use the toilet.

-Michael

From The Beat: And what would you expect from your dog in return? Some flea powder? Barking lessons? Bone burying techniques?

Getting Shot In The Stomach

Getting shot in the stomach ain't very fun. Young, black, and yes friends, from AOB and AOLIB. Anyway, it didn't hurt. It was funny at the time I had noticed I was hit. Everything silent, sounds of bullets flying past my ear, damn. This sewer rat eating thing tried to kick me, but I'm alive. A waste of bullets on me. Now I stunt in they face, tizzin, yokan, turfing on they block. "Man, I feel like I can't be stopped." My hand high with my sign in the air. Always on alert for them fools. Other than that, I stay on the move! Getting shot in the stomach didn't stop or break me down. It made me stronger and not a punk, a beast. Next time I'll be ready when I'm in the streets, waiting for my enemies!! And don't judge yourself for what you don't got. Be glad it's not you getting shot on your own block. Ninjas shooting girls. Don't they life suck! Men are too challenging for them, so they get me, instead!!

-Black Anna

From The Beat: Anna, you're so very lucky to be alive. You may feel like you can't be stopped. But you almost were. To go back out on those streets would be very foolish. Count your blessings. Be grateful you survived. You have strength and determination. Use those life saving gifts, first, to make a better life for yourself, and then, to help other people. You could be a shining example to so many young people, even to adults. We detect, also, a fine mind at work in your story. Use that good brain to come up with a plan to turn your life in a new direction. You know, and we know, that you don't belong on the streets.

A Lecture

What's up, Beat? It Siaki again, droppin' dese lines off my sleeve.

Well, my grandpa used to talk to me and tell me to go to school and get money the real way and stop stealing from people. He said, "Always remember this, love your parents no matter what."

(To be continued.)

-Giant Samoa

From The Beat: This is it? What were you doing instead of writing during the workshop? Okay, we're waiting for the continuation...

My Loss of Innocence

Hey Beat, I would say that my life got complicated when I was in 5th grade. It started when my mom and dad split up.

My mom left my dad for another man and that's when my life started to go downhill.

By the time I hit 13 years old, I started to hang out with the wrong people. I started to smoke marijuana, use cocaine and other drugs. At that point, I knew I didn't really have time to grow up. I was lost in my own problems and didn't have a chance to.

So, now that I'm locked up, I'm going to go the right way, instead of the wrong way.

-Vivian

From The Beat: It's amazing how the break-up of the family can really change one's life - no matter if it happens when you are young or old. But it seems like you do really want to change and you seem like you still are innocent in your heart.

Quetzal

If I were to pick an animal that best describes me, I would have to go with the "quetzal" an ancient bird native to the country of Guatemala, where my family is from. The reason: it's a real colorful type of being, same as me. I like rockin' in fresh fits, in colors nobody's ever seen - with a phat chain grilled out. A quetzal is also intelligent, similar to me, when I make the right decisions. That's my animal. I'm out.

-Lil' Spitta

From The Beat: OK, start using that intelligence. One of the ways we'll be able to tell is by your absence. So get smart and get outa here and don't come back. Fly free and straight and do good things.

Dear Beat

When I get disappointed I deal with it. Like, I'm in here and my 'lil bro got stabbed and I wasn't there. My dad got locked up and I'm not there for my family. My brother in law is doing life and I wasn't there. I'm disappointed and I'll deal with it later.

-L

From The Beat: The men in your family are having a tough time, including yourself. Why don't you make a commitment to yourself and to your family that you will break the cycle, that you will do whatever it takes to set a good example for any other young men in your family who may have given up hopes of leading a good and decent life. The bad stuff has to stop somewhere. Why not with you? And why not let the good life start with you? Why not? Your family has suffered enough, and you have, too. Ask for help. It's out there.

We May Not Want To Hear, But...

Being lectured is around me every day. That's all I hear day in and day out. Staff (counselors) say the same shhh, but when I sit down at night in my room the stuff the staff be saying ain't really shhh. We just think it is at the time, because we ain't ready to listen, it's not what we want to hear at the time. Some of us are looking at time and we don't want to hear anything about life. But sometimes being lectured keeps our mind straight, and that's when it don't matter who's doing the lecturing.

-Travieso Mas Chingon

From The Beat: Sometimes we get accused of "lecturing" in our "From The Beat" response. All we can hope is that some of the things we hear find a place in our brains so that when we're ready to listen, they'll be there.

It Sucks

A lot of people have it way worse then me because they don't have no food or a place to stay. And people in my unit, they doing a lot of time. And it sucks that I see homeboys in here and not chilling on the outs.

-Joe

From The Beat: When you're back chilling on the outs, will you be able to avoid coming to this dead-end place?

Nobody Cares Except About Themselves

People that take their time to lecture some one too closely really want to use that person. If some one pays too much attention to one person they after something, because no one really gives a damn about any one, they only care about themselves. An' if they acting like they do, and don't want nothing from that person, then they got something wrong with them.

-Piece Of Mind

From The Beat: So, you think that nobody acts to help anyone but themselves? Haven't you ever met a genuinely caring person?

Time

Time is money, education and power.

The system's making racks off of me in an hour.

My freedom's being stripped. They trying to charge me for life.

I'm thinking at a young age, being quick to learn my rights.

I wanna be with my siblings, home talking to my girl, 'cause they can be a victim of killings in this cold world.

That's why I say "ef the world" 'cause it's the truth.

No evidence on me, but they're trying to make a suspect in my shoes.

This is some real shhh right here. They trying to play me in court

for a homicide I didn't do. They don't have evidence on me -

trying to cover it up with possession of stolen property.

-M

From The Beat: The Beat isn't the place to try your case, but it is the place to let us all know what it feels like to be in your shoes. Listen carefully to everything your attorney says. If you don't understand something, ask. This is the time to drop all the masks and be your smartest, most attentive self. It is in your best interest to focus carefully on everything. Keep your nose clean. Do what's asked of you. And take stock of your life. Consider how you got here. Consider what you'll do when you get another chance. This is your life. Treat it with respect. It's the greatest gift you'll ever get.

Lecture From Mom

My mom always lectured me about a lot of stuff. For example stay away from gangs and drugs. I always listen to her when she says stuff. It kept me out of a lot of trouble.

-Nacho

From The Beat: Obviously, her lectures didn't keep you out of all trouble... What didn't you listen to that you wish you did? (We didn't print your last piece in this trilogy. It was only three sentences long, and it said you want to go home to your family. We hope that happens soon.)

The Lecturer

Hey Beat, what's up? Big Meg in the house.

I'm gonna comment this week on the lecturer topic. I'm gonna honestly say I have had many lectures in my life from many different types of people and I don't like it. To me, people that try to lecture me are trying to talk down to me. I know the difference between right and wrong. I don't need anyone to tell me. Trust me, I know when I messed up.

I like to realize my rights and wrongs on my own. I hate being lectured. I don't like it. When I was younger, I used to just sit there and take it but now anyone that tries to lecture me, I shut them down quick. No one's perfect and everybody's gonna make mistakes. My friends say sometimes I should be careful with what I say, but - at the time - they laugh because shhh I say is funny.

When I got something to say, I say it. In here, in juvi, I get in trouble a lot for the shhh I say. If I got something to say, I gotta say it. The staff lectures me, but - at the same time - they laugh at what I say. Basically, I'm gonna say what usually gets people to wanna lecture me is my mouth, but you can lecture me all you want because if I got something to say - I'm gonna say it.

Well Beat, that's all I gotta say. Late.

-Big Meg

From The Beat: Hmmm, while we certainly appreciate your strong sense of self, Meg, we wonder what would happen if you let your wall down a little bit and let others get inside. Though lectures can be annoying, sometimes if you listen, you might hear something about yourself that can help you make a change.

Kiddy Time

Hey G-vo Beat? How you doing? Hopefully mas firme. Well, it's this homeboy Troubles from Gilroy coming at you from this max unit. Well, on tonight's topic about some one that's worse off than me...

Well, I'm in here. I just came back from YA alternative but I always look at my situation and then look at other people's situations. I always seem to look at worse things that could be happening, and that makes me feel like I got it easy compared to other people like some of the people like some of the people that are in the pen. They are doing life and all I'm doing is kiddy time. I know I may think I got a long time to go, but a couple of my homeboys are facing 25 to life sentences, so I ain't even trippin' on my time.

But I'm out of words to say, so till next time this abstract minded homeboy is out.

-Troubles

From The Beat: We're not sure it's such a good thing that you're not "trippin'" about your time. We think a little tripping is a good thing — even if the time you've given up to the system is short — if it keeps you from becoming one of those doing 25 to life... or worse.

Lecturer

This goes out to all the people who have somebody that lectured you and it really got to you.

Mom, you were always there for me no matter what I did. You helped me with the struggle of staying off the streets. I'm sorry Momma that I didn't listen to you, but when I got locked up I held my head high for you mom. It was hard; I couldn't even let you see me cry.

But after you lectured me the last thing you said was, God would never turn his back on me. Then you said I love you son. This is what has stayed in my mind and has helped me out. Peace out Beat Within! I love you Mom.

-L

From The Beat: We hope you show your mom this piece. Sometimes, all you need to sustain you is those three little words from your mother.

Worse Off Than Me

What's cracking Beat? This is that one and only Shy boy, and I'm gonna write to you about someone who has it worse than me. And this vato is my brother because he's from the Bay and he got into so much shhh that they pulled his papers and deported him to Mexico. He has been there for like three years now but he was locked up for one year in a Mexican jail and they beat his ass. But yeah, that vato has it bad because he don't know nobody from Mexico and he's stuck over there.

- Shy Boy

From The Beat: Your brother's fate sounds really hard. What does this make you think of the immigration debate that is going on right now? Do you think people should be deported?

A Girl

There's a girl that I liked all through elementary school. She said that I've liked her since kindergarten. We were good friends. We both played in the same Little League. She saw my games and I watched her softball games with other friends of hers and mine. But I haven't seen her since 7th grade. I think of her when I'm in here and on the outs. I wish I could see her again.

-Matthew

From The Beat: You two have had a longer friendship than lots of married folks. Have you asked around? Maybe some of her friends are still around, or friends of her friends. In these matters of the heart, you have to play detective, sometimes. Have you tried to find her?

Worse Off Than You

I think that a lot of people have it worse off than me, especially in my unit B9. A lot of my fellow incarcerated brothers are getting tried as an adult and looking at hella years. And I will most likely go to the Ranch. Even outside these four walls people have it worse than me. I was blessed with a father, mother and a girlfriend that supports me. Some people have families that don't give a damn.

Those are a few that have it worse off than me.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: You are not only blessed to have the support of a family and girlfriend, but it's also a blessing that you recognize it. By acknowledging this blessing, it seems that you are also acknowledging your own obligations to them.

Loss Of Innocence

Hey Beat, I'm writing something that hit me when I was young and I can still remember that scream. In my 'hood a drunk driver hit a little girl and she died. She screamed so loud and I was young, like six or seven at that time. Me and my homie was talking and he brought that up and I was like, "Yeah, I remember that." Me and him was quiet for a moment, because just think about it. I felt hella bad. Now I'm 17 and I still remember that day clearly.

-Buddha

From The Beat: Just a moment of careless driving can leave a preventable tragedy behind, and a lifetime of bad memories.

The Real Word

I do think there are people out in the world that have it worse than me. There is something more challenging than being locked up. They are the homeless people. They wake up at 3:00 are 4:00 clock cold because they sleep outside.

They have to go the corners of the freeway and hold a sign to get money from generous people. They walk around and stand around and asking people for some change or asking for a cigarette. Most of the time they stand around the store waiting for people like me to walk buy and ask for them to buy me a beer and I get them one too. So they get me a beer and I give him money for his and I walk off with my beer.

-Monkey

From The Beat: Don't start liking that beer so much that you end up being one of those homeless people that have it worse than you.

In The Past Years

In the past years I've done a lot that's wrong. I've hurt some people including my mother, my friends and some people around me.

I would like to apologize to everyone I may have hurt. The person I feel I hurt the most is my mother. Every time I get locked up, every time I argue with her, and every time I had her come pick me up from the police station I can tell she feels a lot of pain. I'm sorry for the times I've yelled at her. I'm sorry for making her shed tears.

It hurts me every time I see her cry and I've certainly learned my lesson. I don't ever want to come back here, even though I don't belong in here. I'm sorry - please forgive me.

-Roman

From The Beat: We bet she will, but don't push it any further. There's a limit to one's patience. Even a mother's. And though you've heard this before, we must say it again, because it's true. You have to change because you want a better life. If you have a better life, if you change, it will also make your mother happy, happy beyond words.

My Story

In fifth grade, I got caught up for a pipe falling out of my back pack and I grabbed it and threw half in the trash and the bowl on the roof. They called the cops because the dumb-ass principal said it smelled the worst she's ever smelled before. Can you believe that shhh?

Cops came took my weed, wallet and took pictures. I was put on probation and then I assaulted someone for talking shhh. I laughed when I hit him with a two by four and sent him to the hospital.

I finally got out and then I started smoking hella more and drinking. I had to go to rehabs for freaking weed... That's freaking bullshhh. I don't need no damn rehab for weed, these people are hoots.

FTS, is what I still stand by - fudge the system and everyone in it. I now just ran from my group home and was drunk in Santa Cruz. I jacked a 5th of some Jack and got caught up by the police and now I'm here. When I get out no probation, that's it.

-Yogi Bear

From The Beat: Yogi Bear, now that you are gone, we certainly miss your presence in workshops. Another strong-minded piece about how you think things should be. But we still don't believe that you only want to drink and smoke because you seem to have a big heart underneath it all.

My Innocence Went Away

I lost my innocence at a young age, because I was brought up in a life that caused trouble. It started when I was 11 years old, when I started to get kicked out of school and started to kick it with my O.G homeboys. That's what kind of started it all, because I would never go home when my jefita told me to because I was too involved in getting in trouble with my homeboys. Then it started to get worse and worse as my life went on.

Now, I look back at how I can change my life but it never works. That's how I lost my innocence at a young age. To all stay up and do your time.

-Alviso

From The Beat: Wow, there are so many young people who seem to mark the age of 11 as the one where they really started to get in trouble. But there is still time to change your life, maybe you can't go back to being an innocent kid but you can become a responsible adult.

Surrounded

This one night, I was chilling with my homeboy. Me and him decided to go to Jack in the Crack to get something to eat and I seen some homie that I knew. So I went to say what's up, but by the time homie already left. So I told the homie the business - if you know what I mean - but anyways, he like what I had. So then I left, because my mom picked me up.

The next morning, I woke up and went to my grandma's house. I called my boy, so we could smoke a blunt. But when I went outside, I had nowhere to run. I was surrounded. They told me I was under arrest for assault with a deadly weapon and terrorist treats. I was like: What the hell! I was pissed! But I guess I was at the wrong place at the wrong time. The fool that I saw yesterday did some shhh that I didn't even do. So I got arrested and got sent to county, then transferred to Elmwood. I was in Milpitas jail for almost two months. I beat my case 'cause they didn't have no evidence it was me.

-PlayBoy

From The Beat: Well, considering what you wrote last week about how getting locked up for that might have saved you from some other problems, you should be very grateful to the universe for throwing you some luck.

Animal

I would be a monkey or an ape because they are the animals most closely related to the human. I'd rather be an ape because an ape is bigger and scarier than a monkey.

-Ape Boy

From The Beat: Hey, we've seen some pretty scary looking monkeys. Have you ever seen their teeth when they get angry? We wouldn't want to be around an angry monkey.

Innocence Lost

Dang, I used to be hella innocent when I didn't have a step dad. Well, when my step dad wasn't an a**hole. He used to hit my older brother and me when we were younger. He always hit us because my mom was going to school and he didn't like that, but now he knows better not to hit us 'cause we're bigger.

-Ti

From The Beat: Did you ever tell your mom about how your step dad abused you and your brother? What did she say?

Worse in Africa And Haiti

Someone that's worse off than me are kids in Africa and Haiti. Why? Because for one, I used to be ungrateful because I used to cry about clothes that my family got me and toys that they got me, or sometimes whined about them not giving me enough money or complain about food I used to eat. But I look back on all of that and say I had it good, because some kids don't have clothes to wear everyday or money, or have any food. And one thing my people used to say is you got it good compared to the kids in Third World countries so get the feeze out of my face. These again are some real words from ya boy.

-Shady

From The Beat: It is a part of growing up to start to look outside of yourself at the larger world. But how are you going to use this knowledge of those people in the Third World to change how you act? How does it feel to know that they would love to have the opportunities you have? Does this make you want to do better, or does it make you just not complain as much?

You Think You Have It Bad

I'm sure there are plenty of people worse off than I am. Whether it be financially, health wise and otherwise. I think the only thing that can make someone worse off is lack of opportunity.

Yes, even here in America, I believe that you can sometimes make your own opportunities. But then, there are other places in this world where that does not even exist. The worst part about this whole thing is that the opportunities that we as Americans are giving, are wasted, or taken for granted. We supposedly have an education system that's supposed to "leave no child behind." But from what I can see there are a lot of left in the dust.

Where I am, I see people who are giving opportunities everyday to better themselves and yet, they chose to come back. They say they don't have a choice, but they do. They just don't like the choices given. There are places in this world where they would risk dying to have what we have, and there are often times where people do anything to make it to this country. The amount of food that gets thrown away and wasted is probably enough to feed a small countries.

-Writings of a Mad Man

From The Beat: Hmmm, Mad Man, you are a boatload of contradictions. First, you say that there are children left in the dust and then you say that young people are choosing to come back to the Hall. Which is it? Keep writing!!

Welcome To The System Youngster

The day I lost my innocence was the day I got in the system at age 11. I did some dumb shhh with my homeboys and ever since that day I've been back in court off and on but the system finally got me for something real: robbery and many other charges.

I been here since Mach 16, but it's coo I get out Dec 23. I did my time I went to the Ranch for four months, failed and got 90 days hall time. So I'll be out soon, back on the streets. Well I'm gonna cut this short. Much love to all the homeboys doing time.

-Rascal

From The Beat: You are one of the many who seem to mark age 11 as the turning point to the dark side. That's crazy because 11 is very, very young.

Loss Of Innocence

My life became a challenge ever since I started middle school. It all started there because I know that my lil' cute kid attitude was over because I thought that all my friends started acting "mature" even though we all were still lil' kids.

Growing up was really hard for me. It was hard 'cause everything was new to me and I had to get used to what I was going through everyday. Like, for example, I had to adapt to all of the bad situations, that included gangs, which was the hardest thing to avoid because it was always there when I was playing ball as a lil' kid in a gang related street. So I guess that's when my life got challenging, when I was a lil' kid and then a teen

-Dc

From The Beat: Growing up in a tough neighborhood does seem to make people grow up quicker. How do you think you can change that now for the youngsters in your hood?

Baby Girl

What's up Beat? It's Malo just trying to stay up, you know? Well, I want to tell you that my baby girl is due any day now. I'm just waiting so I can get on O-T to see my daughter and my baby's mom, but I got to come back the same day. But it's all good!

I'm gonna be out in three and a half months and I'm gonna take care of both of them. Don't get me wrong. I'm gonna go to my barrio the next day and see how everything is over there, but 'till then I'm out. Till next week ...

-Malo

From The Beat: It seems like a lot of people write about how they are going to take care of their families when they get out, but it doesn't seem to always happen. What is your plan for helping them? Is it getting a job or moving to a different hood? We're happy for you, but also want to help you think about making a change.

Loss Of Innocence At Eleven

I started smoking at 11, which led to stealing to get weed and drink.

Then, I started getting kicked out of school.

The last step was getting locked up in the Santa Clara County Juvenile facility with people telling you what to do and that it don't matter who you are or who you know – you were once innocent children, now you're grown criminals.

That's my story of loss of innocence.

-D

From The Beat: Do you feel like a criminal? Maybe innocence is more of a state of mind and you can go back to that way of living? This piece sounds kind of like you don't have any more choices, when in reality, you are still very young and can turn things around.

The Past Year

In the past year I've lost most of my friends and some of my family, and they're still trying to take more. The doc said my dad was supposed to pass away four years ago.

I've lost my best friends to car accidents, or fights. I lost my granny to cancer and my uncle to gang violence. And I lost my grandpa to prison. I had no pain. I just wanted revenge.

-All bad

From The Beat: It doesn't get much tougher than that. You've lost more than a fair share. The only thing worse would be to seek revenge. That would inevitably end in more pain for your family, and, of course, for yourself. Revenge is the evil gift that keeps on giving. Time to stop the cycle of preventable violence.

Lecture

Hey what up Beaters? Pues, this is el Mosco. Pues people that lecture me are my jefitos, 'cause they tell me what good things and bad things are in this life.

Pues, another person that lecture me is my hyna, cause she show me very good things that I should do. Pues this vato is running out of time. Alrato.

-Mosco

From The Beat: Do you listen to these people? What do you think of their lectures. At least it seems like you've identified the people who really care about you and that's why they give you lectures.

Growing Up To Quick

What's cracking everybody? It's me the Chicano soon to be a dad. Well I want to write about how I'm growing up so quick. Everybody says that I'm not going to be able to be a kid anymore because I'm about to have a kid of my own. I'm not really trippin' though, cause it seems like I was never a kid.

I've always been hanging out with older homeboys. But anyways, I found out I'm probably having a lil girl. I can't wait! Oh, I'm finally getting out! By the time they put this piece in here, I'll be out this place! But it's not like they'll put this in it anyway, because they never do. Well, I'm going to cut it here – this Chicano is out.

To all, stay up and keep your evil ways held high. Alrato.

-Nemo

From The Beat: Taking care of a little girl sounds like a great reason to grow up and start taking care of things. Perhaps your childhood was stolen by the homeboys on your block, but it seems like you are ready to take that step to becoming a man.

Who Has It Worse Than Me

I know that there are many, many people out there who have it way worse than I do. Not only are there people doing double or even triple the time I'm doing, but there are many people out there who don't even have it as good as I do.

In many countries and other places, there are people dying and praying everyday just to be in my shoes. I don't have a rich, wealthy lifestyle or anything but at least I have a roof over my head, clothes to wear, shoes on my feet, food in my stomach, and – best of all – a family. That's how I know that there are people worse off than me.

-Andrew

From The Beat: It sounds like you have really thought about this and have a sense of the good things in your life. Does thinking of these people make you feel good about your life or does it make you want to do better? You seem like a smart person and perhaps you can choose to improve your life.

My Friend

I know a friend who overdosed and survived it. It's worse than being locked up because you can't get out of that feeling. He felt like fainting but couldn't. The only reason why he lived is because his friends threw him in a cold bathtub full of ice. After that incident he never did drugs again.

-Ly

From the Beat: We don't know what kind of drugs your friend was on, but that bathtub of cold water full of ice probably didn't save your friend. Maybe some greater powers were at work! But your friend is lucky. And he was also lucky that he had some friends around him that cared for him. What are your thoughts on drugs?

Lectures

I've had a lot of lectures in my past, but the most recent one was from my counselor. He's a pretty cool guy and we think alike. He lectures me about life and helps me out and does things that will help benefit me. He feels for me too.

One time I was on C-level for like two or three weeks because I got off, then on, then re-dated. I just didn't care anymore, because I didn't want to take anymore shh from any more counselors. He gave me an hour lecture and he made me realize that when you're in here you got to fake shh for the counselors.

So ever since then I've been doing good and he's going to hook me up with a roommate. He just needed me to act cool, so he can say I've been good and help me out. Thanks counselor.

Viet Tiger

From The Beat: You should take advice from anybody that is trying to help you out. Who knows that advice might come in handy when you need it. Or it might help you realize where you are going and what you're trying to do in life.

My Cousin

The person who has it worse off than me is my cousin. Even though I am locked up in these automatic doors. He's locked up in a house full of hate and heat. He ain't havin' a cool life because his Step-Mom is awful. It's like she's playin' a role from the book called "It."

In this book, the Mom doesn't feed her child and beats him and doesn't include him in the family. It's as if he's a shadow, and he's not there.

When I was on the outs she never allowed him to chill with me. At first my uncle was his hero saying that everything was fine about what he did then. But that woman put stuff in my Uncle's mind and now he won't let him do shhh. It's like my cousin is on lock down, just not in max unit, but the house of heat and hate.

-Listo

From The Beat: If what you are saying is true, you really need to help your cousin out. Nobody deserves to be locked up in a room, getting beating on, and being starved. You better tell somebody that can do something about it, 'cause you can't do anything about it! Seek help from a professional in the hall.

Believe

Believe in yourself,
in the power you have to control your own life day by day.

I try to do it but nobodies perfect, so what can I say.

-Kevin

From the Beat: Nobody's perfect, and even when you're in control you might still lose control. But keep your composure and your mind set on what you wanna do and you will be able to do anything.

Thanks to the Older Homies

What up this is Rascal here in the so-called max. Well I've been lectured by older homies that have been to prison and that have done big crimes and big time. Well they did give me good lectures that did change my life and they were right about what they were talkin' about.

So I am glad that I was listening to what they were saying to me. So thanks to them when things go wrong out in the streets, I don't trip about it. It's all good. It could have been all bad. If I would of started to trip on it, but there was nothing to trip on.

I do have a released date, so it's coo' even if they made up some lies about me. I can't cry like the rest of them who can't hang with the small time in here. I'll be out in the springtime, so it's all good. Thanks for the lectures that the older homies gave me. So this is my word to the wise and that's it.

-Rascal

From The Beat: Are the older homies the only ones that lecture you? How about your parents, or relatives? They don't lecture you? And if they did, would you listen? Do you want to be an OG so you can lecture young homies? Do you have to do big crimes and do big time to be an OG or what? Who else can you give thanks to?

Worse Off Than Me

I'm locked up as you can tell. But It's not that bad. There are people who have it worse. I only have to do a few months. There are people who have to do more time.

-Nacho

From The Beat: Don't become one of those people once you get out of here! (The problem with writing about three topics is that each piece is very short. Next time, choose just one topic to write more about.)

Worse Off Than You

Worse off than you, you clowns have no clue
Posted on the block wit' a gauge, like what it do

That was me on the streets, actin' like a foo'
Learned at a young age automatics were the number one tool

'Till I got locked behind cages, man this shhh ain't coo'
I'm stuck missin' out, even miss goin' to school
But I knew it was comin' when I chose these ways
Now I'm lookin' at 25 to life stuck in a cage
Worse off than you can you feel my rage?

-Nok

From The Beat: Anything involving guns is not coo'. Any negative action is just gonna bring negative outcomes. Go to school and get your education. That way when you get older you'll be ballin' legitly. Put the guns down!!

The Streets Keep Calling Me

I always got a lecture from my homeboys from my hood... to all the OG's. I was never in denial; I was like a sponge soaking up everything they told me. I looked up to them.

The one thing that lectured me the most was about the streets. It always hit a nerve. Always having to watch my back and people looking at me walking through these wicked streets, thinking dead man walking. It hits a nerve but a bad one not hitting to see my life different hitting it to plan my next bad move. My lectures I have for them, just another day livin' in this life of sin.

-Lil' K

From The Beat: What kind of lectures do you get from the OG's? Do they ever tell you to go to school? Are the only lectures they give you street related? Do they ever give you lectures on life? Do you like living this life of sin?

Worse Off Than You

There is one person in my life that may be in a worse off period than me. This person would be my Grandma. She is getting old and she is having more and more strokes. She's been lucky when she had her strokes, because people have heard her and rushed her to the hospital.

She has survived a lot, but I think she has it worse than me. Whenever something bad happens to me, I remember that my Grandmother has it worse. So instead of complaining, I know to suck it up, 'cause I know my grandmother isn't whining.

- Jpizzle

From The Beat: We're very sorry to hear about your grandmother. The older you get the harder it is to stay healthy. She is a strong woman for going through all that and surviving. All you can do is stay out of jail so you can be by her side and help her out.

Good and Bad

It's sad how all of a sudden you are doing good and everything just for your sister. And then you end up somewhere bad...

My sister is eight and a half months pregnant and is having her baby any week. Today I saw my Mom and she told me the good news, but I gave the bad news that I have to stay here 'till the 19th of November, 'cause I got court. I still don't know if I'm going to stay or not.

I am sad because I haven't seen her and can't, but I hope and pray that the baby could wait 'till I get out of j-hall in Santa Clara because I love her.

-Baby G

From The Beat: Congratulations for you and your sister! We hope that by the time we print this issue out you are not reading this response. But just in case you are, don't sweat it, everything's gonna be alright. And you'll be out soon, and stay out so you can spend more time with your sister and the new born.

Sixth Grade

When I lost my innocence I was in the sixth grade. I was introduced to drugs and started kickin' it with the homeboys. I got into trouble with the law and then I finally got locked up. I then went on the run and started to run from my programs, and hurt my family's feelings and stuff. Well got to go Beat.

-Chris

From The Beat: We all have to make mistakes so we can learn from them. Question is, do you really want to learn? Do you want to keep running from everything until you have to face some hard time? Do you want to keep hurting your family's feelings?

This Girl

The turning point in my life was when I got my fifth girlfriend Sam. She pressured me into running away and she introduced me to car jacking, drinking, and smoking. I never got caught because I was too good, but ever since then it was all down hill.

I got on probation, started getting into fights and ditching school. If I wouldn't have gone to jail, I wouldn't have wasted nine months of my life. I'm really pissed at her, because she tried to get me for rape, but I always say you can't rape the willing. And she tried to say that I stole her mom's car, but it wasn't me.

Damn, I think I got out of here tomorrow.

-J-dors

From The Beat: You better ditch that girl if she's causing you nothing but trouble. She's getting you into fights, making you ditch school, got you arrested. What other signs are you waiting for. She doesn't care about you. A real person who cares about you wouldn't try to get you in trouble all like that. When you get out you better take care of yourself and stay out of trouble.

Elementary School

I remember back in the day when I was in elementary school, all I was worried about was when school end and what I'ma for fun after school. As soon as I left elementary school and went to Middle school was when I lost my innocence. When I got there I started kickin' it with people who liked to drink and liked to blaze and get high. I started doing that a lot 'till like half way through sixth grade. When I got arrested after that I was caught in the system and ever since then I have been screwing up.

-Shackleton

From The Beat: Sounds like you've been making a lot of mistakes? How much longer do you wanna be caught in the system? Cause it's up to you to stop repeating your mistakes and stop getting caught up in the system's web. You make what you can of your life. You can't delete the mistakes you made in the past, but you can stop repeating them.

That Animal

If I had to describe me I would say I am a eagle, 'cause I like to soar threw my town like an eagle.

-C

From The Beat: Have you ever been lucky enough to see an eagle in the wild? Because they are the one of the most amazing things you will ever see.

I'm A Wolf

An animal that would describe me would be a wolf. They would be just like me... they are smart and don't tire easily when they run or hunt.

When I run, I can run long distances. I'm smart when it comes to school and sometimes when I make decisions.

Sometimes I make bad decisions, 'cause everyone is not perfect. The wolves live out in the snow and forest; The outdoors. I love to be outside because its fresh and its better than being inside. I believe wolves describes me best!

-J-Pizzel

From The Beat: Wolves are also the smartest of almost all land mammals, and like lions and many other animals, are becoming an endangered species. All dogs originally descended from wolves, so it's like you have tapped into an ancient source of power by choosing this as your animal!

Losing My Old Self

It's been a long time since I've been good

Now all I'm doing is chillin' in the hood

Always boxing on these punks

Because every time I look at them we have this funk

Running from the cops, doing some hops.

One day after school when I boxed this one fool

I met Mary Jane and it was coo'

I was high ever since and that is true

Blunt, after blunt everyday

When I was little I just liked playing and having fun
riding bikes

Going with my mom on hikes

Playing sports with my dad

And when I didn't do my homework he was mad.

Now I'm just locked up in the hole

No fun, no time to do any mo'

Now Beat Within, late I got nothing else to say.

-Chepe

From The Beat: Losing your old self, is called changing. Everybody goes through changes for better or for worse. But the good thing about changing is that you can keep changing. If you are changing for the worst than you can stop what you are doing right and now, and start changing for the better. You can't rewind time, and undo some of the things you did, but you can stop doing what you were doing and try doing something different right now.

Paid I Did To Others

Pain I did to others, was not like no other
 Mom crying, I'm flying
 Guy bleeding,
 Me kicking, somebody hits me,
 I hit back, somebody talk shhh,
 I pop him running from the cops,
 Doing some hops
 Tired of this cell,
 Living like hell

Mom's thinking and thinking about me
 Telling me to stop and what I did was told her to shut up
 Lil sister looking up to me and all I showed her was bad things

Now they're all crying for me to get out and shout
 I'm free, free finally
 And all I did was smoke that weed
 Stopping just to stop hurting my family.

-Chepe

From The Beat: We can feel all the regret in this lyric - it's a beautiful poem - and we hope that you can be back with your mother, and your family and soon. You deserve to be together.

All Bad

One day I was at home and I was chillin' with my friend and we were playin' video games. I stopped playin' and sat on the couch and my mom, cousins, friends and stepdad. My Mom was just talkin' about jail and she told me my PO called and she was like your PO said that I was goin' to go down in some days. So we went to see him and he was like I will detain you.

-Gutt

From The Beat: That must suck knowing that you will have you freedom taken away from you. What happened? We hope that you get your case resolved and you get out. And not come back. What's the plan?

The Arrest

I started to change when I got arrested. My personality started to change; I started fighting and cussing, running away, smoking, stealing, and even stealing cars. I started drinking and coming in and out of j hall. Well that's all.

-Goofy

From The Beat: How did you act before you came to jail? Did you change because you got arrested? Did it make you feel a certain way, where you thought you had to smoke, fight, steal, etc?

Lecture

I've been lectured to do the right things by a lot of people - my teachers, my mom, and people from church. I've always believed in myself but I never do good. But I still believe in myself!

-Gary's Lady

From The Beat: Nobody's perfect. If you fall, just dust yourself off and try again.

Sad And Mad At The Same Time

It was not long ago. I was at the Ranch in the south side. It was Christmas. My mom was supposed to pick me up, but she didn't. I was very sad, and mad at the same time.

But I got over it. I got out the next day, well bye.

-Goofy

From The Beat: we can see how that would feel terrible, especially on Christmas Day! But we're glad you got home quickly after that, and we hope your holidays ended up being better.

My Cousin

My older cousin has always lectured me about things. He says he's been through it all and can help me if I listen. The only thing I don't like about him lecturing me is he only recognizes when I do something wrong.

He tells me good advice, but he always acts like he knows everything and his lectures always make me mad, but also make me think about things.

-Shar

From The Beat: The hardest thing about a lecture is that most of the time you don't get them because you're doing something right, it's because you're doing something wrong. And you're right. People should recognize all the good stuff you do, instead of pin pointing all the bad stuff you do. But you know what? Take that advice anyway, or at least listen. It will help you out.

At Twelve I Loss My Innocence

Well what's up Beat? It's Destiny once again from Gilroy. Well I'm feeling today's topic so dang. ...

Well when I lost my innocence I was 12 years old. It was because I was taken away from my dad and mom. Me and my six brothers and sisters we were at home one day just chillin then all of a sudden a social worker comes knocking at the door and we weren't scared 'cause we didn't have nothing to hide so we opened the door and some lady came in and interviewed us and she found my mom's crack pipe and called the cops they came and took me and my six brothers and sisters to the shelter on Union in San Jose. Dang we were mad.

The next day we found out they already sent my two little sisters to a foster home and man we were mad me and my brother the oldest boy were in the same dorm then they all went to a foster home and I still don't know why, 'cause all of a sudden my life changed it was just me "Destiny" by myself.

I met some black girl and she was a few years older then me. So we just ran and she's from Oakland and I was like fo' sure, then went to Oakland and other cities went thru hell seen my homeboy get shot, then went to a place I wasn't wanted at in LA, and some shhh went down. I was on the run for like 6 months in Oakland and other places.

Well Beat my times up. To everyone who knows me keep yo head up!

-Destiny

From The Beat: Do keep your head. We're sorry to hear about everything that has happened but you have to stay strong. It's easy to just give up. Life isn't fair and life isn't easy either. You got to roll with the punches. Sometimes things happen for a reason. Keep a positive attitude and positive things will come for you. Best of luck in getting yourself out of the system

Eleven

When I lost my innocence I was 11 years old. It was a big change for me. I really didn't realize that I was growing up, but I was, and it was hard. I started to hang out with the wrong people, smoking, doing drugs, getting into fights.

That was also the first time I got locked up. I went straight to Alameda County Juvenile Hall. That was complicated. I didn't know what to do. I was just a young ninja, trying to fit in with everyone. But now it has been the same - just getting into trouble. But all that has to change and that's what I plan on doing. That's what everybody should do, but I'm not everybody.

-Mookie

From The Beat: No, you'll always be only "you". But if you want a good life, the life you deserve, you'll have to put in some real work, the good kind, the only kind of work that will earn you happiness. Many have done it before you. You can do it. Do you want a good life?

Sixteen

I grew up fast. At age sixteen I was already going clubbing and gambling in casinos.

Now that I'm eighteen I didn't want to be an adult. I still want to be a child, to be able to do all the things I used to do. Now I have bigger things to worry about. I have to feed and clothe myself. But I can't turn back time. Now I have to take responsibility for my own life.

This goes out to all don't rush your childhood. And to everybody who has to take care of them selves, stay up.

-Fat Gurl

From The Beat: Sometimes when we're young we wannabe older and sometimes when we're old we wannabe younger. Maybe you rushed it a little bit, but part of growing up is taking responsibilities for your own actions.



Loss Of Innocence

I had a time that my mom and dad got into a fight and then broke up. My dad went to jail for three days. Then my mom went to California and my dad went to Florida. Then six months later my mom called and said that I was going to California. Then 9 months later I got locked up. That was my story.

-David

From The Beat: When parents split, the kids almost always suffer. It's very painful and often, the pain results in behavior by the kids that might never have happened otherwise. Perhaps this is what happened to you. Being a grown-up is very complicated. Sometimes parents have very good reasons for splitting up. But that doesn't make it easier for kids. We know it's difficult for you, because you love both parents. But messing up with the law only makes your life more difficult. And nobody wants that - not you or your mom or your dad.

Loss Of Innocence

I lost my innocence when I started freshmen year. You stop believing in myself and I started doing things I shouldn't have been doing. I stopped being the smart innocent athletic person I was. And I feel so bad 'cause doing good made my parents proud, doing bad made my parents sad and mad.

-Gary's Lady

From The Beat: Get out and go back to what you were doing and make your parents, and as well as yourself proud.

Once

Once I started school - from Head Start 'til now - I've been getting in fights a lot. First I was a nice kid. But other kids would make fun of me and I would start to cry, and they would make fun of me some more. Then I'd hit them.

I never lost a fight until 5th grade, when I was hit from behind. And during this time, I was getting hit at home. I would get beaten half to death just because my stepfather hated me. So I would take it out on other kids. So then I was told to be nice, and I was.

All of a sudden I started gangbanging and beating fools up. I even put a kid in the hospital, with minor brain damage, and a broken finger. His homies jumped me and they broke my rib. Nothing happened to them, but I got charged for it. And then I started to get G-rides, and I got caught up for it. So now I'm in here, but I want to do better.

-Raymond

From The Beat: Your story is a perfect illustration of how violence escalates. 'Escalate' is a fancy word meaning that your life became more violent step by step, bit by bit. The only way to end the upward spiral is to refuse to participate in violent acts. Often, it takes far more courage to walk away from violence than to participate in it. Are you brave enough to walk away from it? We sure hope so. Because as the violence escalates, so do the penalties. You've gone step by step, bit by bit, from teachers telling you to be good to earning yourself a room in juvenile hall. It doesn't take much to predict the future if you don't get off the violence train.

Pressured Behind a Safeway

One time one of my friends and I were kicking it behind a Safeway and we didn't have nothing to do, so he kinda pressure me into going in there with him so we can both jack a bottle.

We both got one and someone saw us and we got caught. I stopped myself from saying no, because he was down to do it but I didn't want to leave him hanging.

I didn't get anything got out of it and I got arrested. Nope I'm not gonna let no one pressure me anymore.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Do you still hang out with this friend? And do you have other friends that push you into situations or actions that could get you in trouble?

Lecturer

I remember when my mom and my aunts used to lecture me about smoking and getting into fights. They would be like, "If you don't listen to me, you will be going somewhere you don't want to go." I would be like, "I don't care." But now that I am locked up, I be like, "Damn I should have listened."

-Cornbread

From The Beat: You should have listened! But it's never too late to listen. You made the mistakes you made, now it's time to learn from them. Now, you have to learn the hard way. It's up to you to make it harder or easier for you from this point on.

My Life

I had a good life. My life went down hill when my dad was shot.

When I was twelve, my uncle was shot because he saw something he shouldn't have seen.

When I was a young teen I had my first kid. Now I have two. I took the blame when drugs were found in the house. Now I'm stuck in the system and I can't get out.

-L

From The Beat: You have indeed had a difficult life. You have to get it straightened out. We know you don't want your kids to think that the way you've been brought up is normal. You'll have another chance. You should be preparing for it, everyday. You'll need an education. You'll need a decent job. And you'll need a home of your own for you and your family. That's a big order, but that's what makes a good dad a good dad. Ask your counselors to point you toward the help you need. You'll be surprised how helpful the system can be when you're willing to work hard at doing the right thing.

That Lecturer

I was once, told by someone very close to me "I'm not going to really hurt anyone but myself." I was told that when I was younger and I guess that I kind of lost that thought along the way. I completely forgot that I'm the one that's going to get locked up in a cell whether or not I did a crime I was still with the wrong people and knew better.

The person that told me that is hurting just as bad as me and it's all because I forgot what she told me. Mama you're always on my mind Love ya!

-Kristina

From The Beat: She was right, 'cause you're the only one that's gonna face the consequences of the actions you take. But on the other hand, everything you do to, also affects all the people around you that really love you and care about you. She don't want to see you in jail. She wants way more for you! Get back in school and stay free!

My True Feeling In Me!

Days go by when I feel like rain pouring down on the whole world to be

Happy like butterfly flying with bees from rose to rose, tree, to trees

Like a romantic date watching T.V

These are my days lonely just me

To be in love to be in don't

Too cherish the world and struggle in the street Angels in the sky, thunderstorms striking down on me

These are my feelings inside of me

To love not to hate, but to dislike somebody

Enemy or friend they cant stop me

Loving everything I do in these streets

With my daughter and kids soon to be

Words of wisdom and love coming out of me

The struggle and pain selling drugs, and getting gunned down

My man not here to support me

The love for my family and for me no longer runs in the street

To do what's right, to be responsible, take responsibility for my actions and no longer be That person selling drugs on the street, be a mother and a adult that's the new me!

-Anna

From The Beat: We are very happy to hear that you are ready to leave that negative lifestyle behind. We are not trying to say that what you were doing was wrong or right, but you already know the risks involved when you are living that way. You could end up in jail or end up dead. And that wouldn't benefit you or your family. We hope you stay strong, and congratulations on your new lifestyle.

Pressured Into Smoking Marijuana

I have been pressured to smoke marijuana.

I did it and I liked it. But till this day I chose to quit, 'cause it's no use of doing it, it just messes up your body. I am in a good shape and I don't want to mess up my body.

But yeah no one told to quit -- I just wanted to because I think it it's the best for me.

-Joseph

From The Beat: When you make a decision to do something and it's on your own, not because someone told you too, then you know that the decision is for real. Hit us up in a couple months to write a piece on what it's been like not smoking, and whether it's had a big effect on your life?

*With my daughter and kids
soon to be
Words of wisdom
and love coming out of me*

Desperate Over A Girl

I have been desperate. Let me tell you how I broke a girl's heart and no one wanted to be with me, so I went out and bought her a lot of things, and told her a lot of nice things, so I could get back with her.

That was just a good example of being desperate. Then a few weeks later I was able to get back with a lot of girls. And till this day I never did anything bad to a girl again.

-Manuel

From The Beat: Have you stayed with this same girlfriend? Or have you gone out with other girls since then? Are there other times in your life when you changed everything about how you acted and it made things better for you?

Loss Of Innocence At An Early Age

I think I lost my innocence at a very early age. It did not completely affect me until the death of my mother in 2005. I was angry and hurt by her passing and I refused psychiatric help. This had a dramatic impact on myself as well as my family. Since then, I have rallied to become a helpful family member and be the better person I can be. Although I am incarcerated, I have big plans for the future, which I will pursue.

-S

From The Beat: Huge losses like that are difficult to take. Did you change your mind about receiving help? We note that you are well spoken. We hope you put your education at the top of the list. The bigger your plans, the more a good education will come in handy.

Everyone Gets Pressured

I have been pressured to do a lot of things but everyone gets pressured, not only me.

I been pressured to smoke, steal, and fight.

I also do those things because I want to experience them.

-Julio

From The Beat: This is a very good point. Sometimes people don't just get pressured into doing things they DON'T want to do, but also things they DO want to do (or maybe the darker or angry sides of themselves) want to do them. Maybe the pressure is just that added little push to make the dangerous things happen?

Have You Ever...?

Have you ever...
Seen a beazy get beat over the head with a bat
Because she didn't bring his money right?
Got drunk with friends by the club
And decided to start a fight?

Have you ever...
Seen a body fly from three stories up
And hit the dumpster and scream for 911?
Seen a person lose a fight
And hit the corner and start bussing?

Have you ever...
Seen a thief hit a lick
And get off wit' it
'Cause it's different
When it ain't you?

-Hiding Behind The Pencil

From The Beat: Have you ever seen or done any of the tragedies that you write in your poem? We assume you have. Or, tell us what inspired this piece of work?

I Should Have Listened To My Mom

I've been lectured before... All I have to say is "I should have listened to my mom about staying away from trouble."

-Sneaky

From The Beat: That says it all, but we wonder, do you also have a voice that you trust inside you that warns you when you're about to totally mess up? Does that voice tell you what you want to hear or what you totally don't want to hear? What happens when you listen to your own voice? What happens when you don't?

I Feel Like I'm Lost

I'm so mad
'Cause I'm getting so sad
I feel like I'm lost
I feel like toast, garbage
I stand alone now
But yesterday I was with my loved ones
Now everyone is calling my loved ones, "bums"
Lil' Mama

You are my man
And I'm your #1 fan
I miss you every day
And I lust for your kiss every day
You say you love me
But you know love costs a fee
I'm locked up
And can't say, "What's up?"
I miss you

And I'll be out in a few
Lil' Mama

I'm a lost kid, and that's for real

I've been messing up so hard. I'm almost eighteen, and I'm still messing up. If I keep it up, I'm going to find myself in the Blue Roof woman's section of Marin County Jail. I got to stop, but I have too much things running through my mind, like running, or just stupid crap. I need to get my shhh together.

-Lil' Mama

From The Beat: You know yourself very well, and that should help you out a lot. You have time now, in juvy, to really think through what you're doing with your young life. Young people your age are often going through similar conflicts and confusions that you are, and, regardless of their best intentions, you can't always expect them to be reliable. So now you know that you can't allow yourself to get into any mess that you, yourself, can't handle, right?

You Gotta Listen To People You Don't Like

Right now I'm just doing my time, all bored. I can't wait to get 'til I get out. It's weak being in here—the food is nasty, and you always gotta listen to people who you don't even like, but is nothing I can do. Just do my time and get released and get a job and make money.

-Jr

From The Beat: You're right, you don't get to choose who you're in juvy with, and you're probably not going to like everybody, but so what? Can you stay to yourself, enjoy some of the young people you're with, read, play basketball in the court?

Black Heart

Young ninjas my age growing up
Future is either life in prison or, basically, death
Growing up wit' a single mom
Little brother and sister
But you always on the run, losing breath
When you in and out of a juvenile facility
From this hall to that hall
When you feel that you are alone
In the black heart

-Jayleon

From The Beat: You already know what results can come from messing up and going to juvy, so how can you change your life so you won't go to prison or die young? How can you help your mom with your little brother and sister? You may feel so alone in juvy, in the black heart of life.

Burned

One minute you tell me you love me
And the next you say you hate me
One minute we are kissing and hugging
Then the next,
You have me leaking blood with bruises and bumps
I hate when you leave me at the tellie
And say you are going to visit your mom
Then you go and cheat on me
I can't trust you anymore
I wish I could and I love ya
Now I'm locked up and you're out
And I know you're cheating again
But it's okay, because you're stuck with me
Because I'm pregnant with your baby

-Sparkles

From The Beat: What are you planning to do? You already know you can't trust this man. Are you ready to take care of your baby yourself? Will your family support you, help you out? Please don't think this guy is stuck with you and your baby. You know some guys vanish whenever there are problems with a lady, and it sounds like he already has, so it may be just you and your infant. Get help!!

Straighten Out While You Can

Everybody who is locked up, straighten out while you can, especially if you gangbang—all it's going to lead you to is death or prison.

In the past five months, I have seen four deaths and six people got to prison. Even my friend, Kerrie, went into prison for two murders. Some of our homies snitched, but it's cool. Much love to him, even though I think he is innocent.

-Sparkles

From The Beat: Great advice. You have our hearts for your friends' tragedies. You don't write about what mess brought you into juvy, but now you have some time to really think about what you're doing with your life. Are you in danger of getting sucked into the heavy drama your friends are involved in? If so, can you get yourself out of it for good, when you're free again? You've just written what destiny that drama can bring you.

I Influence Others

No one influenced me to do what I did. Actually, I was doing all the influencing... See, one day I was sleeping in my shed (my room,) in the yard and it was Saturday and I had a pocketful of cash. Anyway, my brother and his friend and his friend's girl woke me up and the first thing I thought of was, "Let's get some bud." Then I called my dealer and he told me he just turned twenty-one, so I was like, "Hook it up with some brew," and I asked him for six 40s and the tree and I paid him and he went on his way.

About three hours, all six 40s and a quarter of tree later, I found myself on top of a car, caving the room in. Big mistake. I ran home and threw my sneaks over the fence and ran in my shed. I knew I was done for. About thirty minutes later, the cops were at my door with the car owner. I was so tanked I could barely stand. Then I got arrested in my own driveway and every neighbor you never want to see you like this, drove by. I felt like a fool. That started a big chain of getting in trouble.

-Richard

From The Beat: You were a major embarrassment that day. Now tell us what big chain of trouble did you start? How did you handle it? Why is it that your basic, full attention seems to be on weed and beer? We hope you finish your tale of trouble and let your readers know what you've learned from all this.

Me!

Pain and suffering, they always invite me
Devil and demons, they don't fright me
Mom and Dad, they despise me
Going to jail, it doesn't surprise me
Drugs and alcohol, they don't kill me
Stupid... I just use them, do you feel me?
Fear of death, it will find me
But until that day, it's all behind me

-Tinie

From The Beat: You sound like you feel like your young life is already behind you. Why do your parents despise you? What can you do to get along with them? You are growing up and probably want to make your own decisions, not have to answer to them, but if you're choosing drugs and alcohol, as you write, that is a big problem. Now that your life is partly under your control, how are you going to guide it wisely?

Broken Heart

My heart is broke—being in this locked up place. I'm not used to it. I love bein' on the outs. Now it is different—the things I do on the outs keep me and my dude rich. Now I'm sitting in here, broke. I thought doing what I was doing was worth it, but now I'm addicted to drugs and skip school, and now my dude ain't around. After all of the things we have been through, he is still gone and so is my money. Now I sit here, crying and missin' him every day.

-Sparkles

From The Beat: You don't write specifically what you were doing on the outs to support your man and yourself, but it sounds shaky. You've learned a really hard lesson, we hope. Don't put yourself out there when you know what you're doing is illegal and/or wrong. Why wasn't this guy working for you both? Since he's gone, because your money is gone, you know all you need to know about him. The good news is that each day you're a part, the pain of his vanishing will diminish for you.

I Preach Without A Gun

Rooftop setting, walk around, fenced in
Sentenced to my life
Street is my turf
I work to produce birth
I see it for what it is
Not what it's worth
Produce
There's no excuse
For puttin' lead to use
Mission submission
Beezies kissin'
Beezies a whole molly whop of wishes
I reach for a peach
Taste too good to be reached
I'm almost done
I preach without a gun

-Jlee

From The Beat: What is your life on the outs like? In a sense, we're all sentenced to our lives, but we get to shape them pretty much as we choose, don't you think? Do you like your life on the outs? Now that your life is almost all yours, how do you want to live it?

Pee Wee Talks About Marin City

TBW: Hi, Pee Wee. This is your interview for The Beat Within. What would you like to be interviewed about today? You get to choose the topic, because it's your interview. What's on your mind?

PW: I want to talk about Marin City.

TBW: Okay, go ahead. Without straight representing, tell us what it's like for you to live in Marin City. What do you and you homies do there?

PW: Me and my friends shoot dice a lot, smoke weed. We go to a lot of functions—we go to concerts, hotel parties, we be at strip clubs.

TBW: Do you have neighborhood barbeques?

PW: Naw, we don't have no barbeques.

TBW: What kind of concerts do you go to?

PW: Rap. We be on stage.

TBW: Do you rap?

PW: No, but my patnas do. We call our rap group "The Stunna Boys."

TBW: What are stunna boys?

PW: You like big chains, big diamonds, you're iced out.

TBW: What does your group rap about?

PW: Drugs, girls, sex and money.

TBW: What about you? What is your role in The Stunna Boys?

PW: I don't rap, I talk shhh at the end.

TBW: What do you add at the end of your group's raps?

PW: About gangbanging' our turf.

TBW: Where do you go?

PW: Everywhere—across the Bay, San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, Marin County. It could be somebody's party we don't even know. We just all go.

TBW: What do you all do at your parties?

PW: We do turf dancing, drink, smoke, pop pills.

TBW: What did you used to do in Marin City when you were little guys, when you were growing up?

PW: We'd go to the rec and play basketball with the OGs.

TBW: Do you play basketball with the young kids in Marin City?

PW: If I'm just passin' by the rec and kids are playin', I might put one up.

TBW: But you don't have a team of little kids you teach to play basketball in Marin City?

PW: Naw.

TBW: What do you do with the little kids?

PW: We play Madden football—it's a video game.

-Pee Wee

From The Beat: In your group's raps, what do you teach your listeners about your life in Marin City that's different from anyone else's growing up in the Bay Area? New York? You say you party down and write raps, but what do you, yourself, do in Marin City, that maybe your homies don't? Help little kids learn to read? Help guide the little kids away from gangbanging? Besides being one of your crew, who are you? Don't be apart of the problem, be a part of the solution!!

There Is No Time To

There is no time to trip.
The past is like dust in the wind.
There is no time to cry.
My problems pass me by.
There is no time to reminisce.
Fate is fate. I can't change this.
There is no time to promise.
I have to focus on myself.
The only thing I have time for
is making fun of Kolona The Elf.

-Jackson

From The Beat: WE hope you will have time to be a bit more serious too, about getting up and out of the system. What's your plan?

Best Lecture

The best lecture I've heard was when I was out on the streets. I ran into my uncle and he told me that if you want to succeed in life, you need responsibility. "You will go through good and hard times, he said, but always remember that nobody is perfect. Continue on and never give up." And that's what I did.

Now I am paying the consequences for one act. And when I get out, I'm going to do better, and be smarter, and I'm never going to stop.

-Trent

From The Beat: Persistence is the key to most successful efforts. We learn by making mistakes. But as important as mistakes are, it's a good idea to try to make new mistakes, to not make the same mistake over. By a process of elimination, we eventually end up with the right way, or at least the best way, to do something.

Desperation

When I hear the word desperate, I think about being angry. One time I felt desperate was the other night, in my room, late at night. I couldn't sleep because my neck hurt. I stayed awake some of the night.

-Rodrigo

From The Beat: We bet you were thinking about being locked up and missing your family.

Chameleon

The animal I think I'd like to be is a chameleon because all they do all day is chill like a villain. Another reason is because they can change colors when they need to hide. So, if I needed to hide from something or somebody, all I'd need to do is change color.

-Jose

From The Beat: And what would you need to be hiding from, Jose?

The Pet Talk Interview

Q: If your pet could talk, what would it say?

A: Give me some water.

Q: What kind of pet do you have?

A: Pure bred Siamese cats. I have two of them. When I was six, I hurt one of them. I grabbed it by the legs and swung it.

Q: How do you feel about that now?

A: She attacked me. Now she's dead. We gave her pain medicines for awhile. She actually died of old age.

Q: What about the other cat?

A: The other one was a fat cat. She passed away a couple of months ago. I buried her in the back yard.

-Albert

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing a bit about you and your cats.

ROP

Well, here I am, doing dead time, waiting to go to Nevada, ROP. It's the program I'm staying at for awhile. I was denied by another program, because of my charges. But I've heard that ROP is very helpful. I plan to take advantage of it, mentally and physically.

I'm looking forward to a visit from my hyna and to show her my true love towards her. Well Beat, I'm out. I'll get back at you if that vato up above allows me to.

-Abraham

From The Beat: Hey, we've heard good things about that place, too. But you've got to stick it out. It's a program that makes you work hard, but the reward is worth it. You'll get to feel good about yourself. You'll learn good habits and we hear that they have a darn good athletic program, too. We wish you good luck. With your program and your girl.

Eagle

If I were an animal, I'd like to be an eagle because they're really good at attacking the enemy. They have good eyesight and are smart about what they do.

-Robert

From The Beat: We agree that eagles are smart, and that they have good eyesight. And that's exactly why they don't have to do much attacking. They can see great distances and can avoid most of their enemies. The greatest enemy of eagles turned out to be human beings. For many years we humans used a pesticide called DDT. It poisoned not just insects that were attacking crops, but wonderful creatures, like eagles. By the way, we hope you aren't buying that nonsense that other kids are "the enemy". The real enemy in this country is poverty and racism. And we don't have to use violence to beat this enemy. We can do it buy getting educated and by the power of the ballot box. We need to support politicians who will work to end poverty and racism in America. That's where your energy should be going Robert. Get serious about your education. Kids from rival gangs are not your true enemy. When you fight each other, instead of the true enemy, everybody loses, especially you guys, and your families.

The Journey

The journey of an elephant....

he does it for the hell of it.

But he does it with conviction,
like I did when I went celibate.

But that, too, doesn't last.

He throws it aside like ballast.

I don't know why this huge creature
does the things he does.

I can't explain the way he walks
or why his trunk has fuzz.

So, next time you see Babar,
you ask.

-Jackson

From The Beat: Darn, we saw Babar last night, before we read your poem, so we didn't get to ask that burning question. What was that question, any way?

Don't

Don't insult me.

I'm not a machine.

I can whisper secrets.

I can feel the weight of my brain.

And I'm not an angel.

I'm nothing special

but I need a special kind of hero.

This is not a secret:

I always end up in the gutter.

-Jackson

From The Beat: Sometimes you're our hero, Jackson. We like to hand a copy of The Beat to someone who doesn't know about it and say: look, just look at this poem by Jackson, or this short essay by 'whoever'. Sometimes, Jackson, you really knock us out. But we don't want you hanging out in gutters. Get it together man. The world needs your big noggin.

Lecture

The best lecture I heard is from my mom. She told me that she and the family will always be there for me, through thick and thin. I never doubt her.

She always comes on visiting days, twice a week. I really appreciate what she does for me. I know that when I get out she wants me to do my best and to stay out.

When I get out I'm going to get a job and pay my restitution so I can get of probation and find my solution.

-Buddha

From The Beat: We hope you find that solution, too. Hey, when you gonna write some more of those dynamite poems? We're thirsty.

Happiest Week Ever

Well, this week was my happiest week ever because I got to see my son for the first time.

It was a good feeling, a feeling I've never had before. I also found out that I might get out early, maybe late December. Whatever it is, I won't trip, but it would be nice to be out by New Year's.

-Bugsy

From The Beat: We are happy for you. Stay away from the pesticides.

Never Turn Back

There is no time to turn back.

Reverse becomes lack.

You are the one holding the pack.

Begin in darkness.

Never turn back.

Don't get off track

for there is silence.

- M

From The Beat: Yes, the long silence, the one we are not patient to 'hear'. Good writing. Very provocative.

Under The Street Light

Under the streetlight

I see my friend with tears in his eyes.

I touch him on the shoulder

and tell him to take that frown off his face.

He stands there looking like a gypsy.

He strokes his hair and smiles.

It's as if he took a shovel and buried the sadness.

He looks happy now.

-Buddha

From The Beat: You've got a magic touch, Buddha. Good writing.

Again

Damn, back again. This is my sixth time in here. I failed my group home. I was there five months and had three months left. I always get so close to finishing something but then I find myself behind a closed door that I can't open when I want. I guess it's that "gang mentality" that's inside me. I have the heart of a lion and I don't let anything get me down. One day I'll get out.

-Andrew

From The Beat: Andrew, it sounds to us like you are a little bit down. Why shouldn't you be? It's only natural. You got pretty close to your goal, and then you dropped the ball. That's a pretty reasonable thing to feel bad about. Next time, you'll get closer, maybe even finish what you've started. Now, about this "can't stop, won't stop" business. That's plain stupid. And you don't strike us as a stupid fellow. If you had a headache, you wouldn't bang your head against the wall to make it go away. You'd take an aspirin. Who wins when you follow a dumb idea to its logical conclusion? Not you, that's for sure. Wake up. Use your intelligence.

Desperation

When I hear the word 'desperate', I think of survival, and being poor, and needing necessities - of things not in your possession or within your reach.

-Trent

From The Beat: Yes, those are conditions that would make most of us desperate. We hope you and your family have not had to experience those conditions. But we know that many families do. It makes us sick to know that in the world's richest country, there exists great poverty.

Talking Pet

If my pet could talk he would say "chuck up some mota and beef." That's all he would say to me. My pet is a dog named Homey, and he saved my life. Now he lives with my friend because I was homeless on the streets of Santa Cruz.

-Mike

From The Beat: We'd love to hear the story about how Homey saved your life. And we'd like to hear about what it was like to be homeless in Santa Cruz. How did you eat? Where did you sleep?

Disappointment

I deal with disappointment by playing sports or I watch TV or listen to music. I like listening to rap. My sports are soccer and basketball. And I like to look at Cribs, when it's on.

-Rodrigo

From The Beat: Do you ever deal directly with what disappointed you in the first place? Sometimes it helps to do that. And other times, playing sports is a really good idea. Strenuous physical activity can cleanse your brain, give you a fresh way of looking at the world.

Hawk

If I could be any animal I would be a hawk. The reason is that hawks fly the fastest of any birds. You could say it's the family name. A hawk is the sickest animal in the world.

-Mike

From The Beat: Have you studied hawks? Ever watched one dive for prey? Did you know that at UCSC, there is a project that studies the Peregrine Falcon? What's the difference between a hawk and falcon?

A Few Lines From Kasper

I have court next week and I should be getting out on house arrest. If not, I'll be here, reading this, when it gets published.

If I was an animal, I'd like to be a killer whale because they're hella big and hella mean. And I'd be one because they're hella free, too.

To all the homies, in every city and every institution, keep your heads up. Alrato.

-Kasper

From The Beat: Hey Kasper, ask us about the guy who rode on a wild killer whale's back.

Lion

I would like to be a lion because I would feel like a king. And I could eat like a king and hunt like a king. I wouldn't want to be a cheetah because they run away too much. I wouldn't want to be a snail. That's the opposite of a cheetah. Snails are too slow. But a king is tough and never backs down. So I want to be a lion.

-Albert

From The Beat: Lion it is then. We now pronounce that you are a lion. And we can do that, because we're kings.

Doing Rhyme, Doing Time

I got sent to the hall to do my time.
 I'm beginning to lose my mind
 in this gangster A time.
 As I find the time to live
 I begin to give and give.
 When I lived I tried so hard,
 but I played the same card.
 Now I'm in the same ward.
 As I do my time I lose my mind.
 I continue to rhyme
 but I rap about the same old crime.

-Z

From The Beat: Maybe it's just the opposite of what it seems. Maybe you're really finding your mind and losing your sickness. Staying clean is hard, but if it takes some down time to clear out your system, it could be time well spent. You are a very bright fellow. It's time to say goodbye to the crap that's keeping you down. The world can't afford to waste a good mind like yours. The world is sick and it needs healing. The older generations have messed up the planet. It's your generation that must fix the mess. You could, as they say, be part of the problem, or part of the solution.

Lecture A Punk?

As a young person, I've gone through my share of lectures – to hell and back, trust me. My family has done a good share of the lectures for me being a punk rocker, for drugs, and for smoking cigarettes.

At school my teachers try to talk to me, but I tell them I don't give an eff, and ask them to leave me alone.

As a punk, people look at me differently. All they see is my exterior, my Mohawk, the color of my hair, the way I dress and how I don't give an eff about anything they say about me. So, lecturing me is going where you know it's going – nowhere.

-Mike

From The Beat: We have a question – to whom would you listen? Whose advice might actually mean something to you? We know who you won't listen to, but who do you respect out there in the huge, huge world?

Desperation For A Hit

The word takes me back to the time when I was sprung off meth. I would do "desperate" things just to get high. I would steal from anyone, including my family. I would be in the wrong hoods trying to score. Sometimes I'd be up at four of five in the morning, in my mom's car, looking for meth. In other words, I did a lot of stupid, desperate things. But the worst thing I did was to pick drugs over my family.

-Jesus

From The Beat: Thanks for your straight forward, honest description of your moments of desperation. We truly hope those days are behind you. It sounds as if you've moved on. Did you seek help?

Animal

I wanna be a wolf because they prowl through the night.
 I'm a predator looking for my prey in the crazy night.
 I'm hearing voices as I run through the dark.
 Might ruin anybody who opposes me through my crazy fight
 with the demons. I take flight 'til I die in the morning light,
 that's right.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Keep your sights narrowed on those demons. Leave the rest of us alone, OK, Mr. Werewolf.

The Same

My life's the same.
 It's getting a little lame –
 selling drugs and getting no fame.
 I'm a young teen. I have a kid on the way.
 I voice what I say.
 I live in the Bay.
 I realize I've spent my time wrong.
 I did the same thing
 and sang the same song.
 I knew I was wrong
 but I could not stop.
 I never smoked rock
 but always got caught
 doing the wrong deal.
 My life became real.
 I begin to feel the pain
 that I caused.
 I'm insane.
 I've lost in the game.
 I found my way to lame
 but it's gonna be the same.

-Z

From The Beat: We doubt it will be the same. Consider this: before you are thirty years old, your child will be the age you are now. What kind of life do you want for your child? What kind of world do you want your child to be living in? At fourteen, you've already seen more of the rough side than most folks will ever see. You have first hand experience of how things shouldn't be done. Get it together, not just for your child, but for yourself and for the rest of us, too. You have important work to do.

That Crazy Animal

If I could choose an animal, I would be a cheetah because they are fast and can jump high, and they are crazy.

-Josue

From The Beat: Are they crazy? So what does that say about you?

My Pocket

My pocket is like a deep dark closet.
 Who knows what you'll find – a hammer?
 You could hold an auction with its contents.
 But I prefer to be a charity
 with these things, my temporary treasures.
 The karma's better that way.
 This was my father's path, as well.

-Jackson

From The Beat: Is he the one who gave you your poetry genes? Your poetry genes have very deep pockets, too. And we're grateful to you for sharing the contents with us.

A Poem

A poem
 from Rome
 straight off the dome
 'cause that's where I roam.
 And I'm known
 from the homie Timon.
 And I like limon,
 Simon.
 That's my poem.

-Fulgencio

From The Beat: Hmmm, so that's a poem? So why did we groan?

Lecturer (My Best Friend)

I remember when I was just going my way doing what I did, not caring because nobody else cared what I did.

Then one night (at the club) this guy was trying to talk to me, but I didn't listen 'till he got my attention and he asked me "Do you know what guys think when you dance like that?" Then he started telling me what they think.

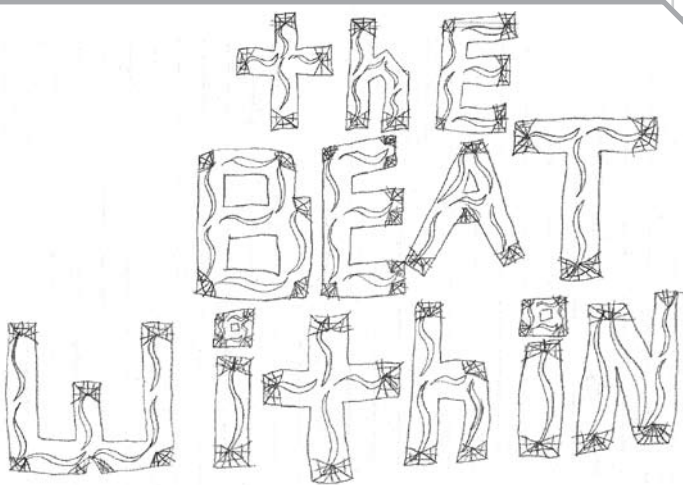
We'll I didn't listen to him, then I saw him again at the club and I found out he was the security guard there, so that night he was telling me about my ways and I didn't listen to him.

We'll I kept going over there and I finally started to kick it with him and after that I started telling him my problems and he was there for me, and told me how it was. Then we got really close and he started taking care of me, he picked me up, took me to eat, I cried in front of him and not once has he never been there. Every problem I have with my family or anything he is there to tell me the truth and told me, "keep your head up and do it for yourself, show them I'm strong and can do it" then he came to me for advice and he ended up asking me out, now my best friend is my boy friend.

Since day one to today he hasn't let me down. Now that I'm slippin' and keep doing bad the more he helps, he told me, "never let anyone or anything get you down. You'll change, I know it's hard but you can do it." So this day I love my best friend my boy friend, and give thanks that I have someone who cares about me. Thanks Tony!

- Stephanie

From The Beat: It's not easy living a life with out any one, but it's good that you found some one who cares. We at the Beat have a question for you. Where are your parents? It's also sad that not once did you mention any thing about any family members in your life in a positive way?



Loss of Innocence

My life has changed since I was a little girl. When I was a little girl I was so sweet, nice, polite to a lot of people, and the most respect I had was for my family. Especially for my Grandpa.

Ever since my Grandpa passed away I just lost it. I lost respect for every body and I started doing bad and running away. Then finally I got caught up in the system, and I keep coming back.

- Shorty

From The Beat: It's not easy loosing a person you love and care for. If any thing you should gain respect, live for the things your Grandfather taught you. Stop the "Bad" and start living for all the good that could be in your life. Think positive not the other way around.

Worse off then you

G-vo Beat, it's that gurl Traviesa coming out of Unit F writing about the topic worse off then you. I know there are people that have it worse then me, a lot of people out there have it worse the all of us in here. Some people don't have any where to sleep, no cloths on their back, no family that's there for them. We all should be thankful for having the things we have right now. So you out there be thankful for what you got, because there is some people that don't have anything in the world. All to the people that are locked up don't look at it like a bad thing because stuff happens for a reason. Look at it the positive way, we have a roof over our head and cloths on our back and a place to lay our heads, food to eat so be thankful. We'll I got to go for now, weno mucho amor y. Respect

-Traviesa

From the Beat: Yes, that is always the case, there is always some one out there that has it worse off then we do. The best you can do is do your best and don't take what you have for granted.

Ten Years Old

When I was about 10 years old it was the first time I seen my mom smoke meth, she did not know that I was hiding in her closet. I looked out of the crack of the closet, and seen my mom hit that pipe. At first I didn't know what it was she was smoking, then I asked my brother what it was. He told me it was meth, and it scared me.

So one day I saw some weed on the table and a little pipe, and I packed it that was the first time I got blazed. I thought it was all right to do it because I saw a lot of people do it so I figured it was ok.

I hit about thirteen and that's when every thing started popping off, like I started doing "soft". I was already getting high, and I started to drink and having sex.

Now that I'm fourteen and I know more then I should. I have changed and when I get out of this bull shhh D-home I'm not going to go back to the stuff I was doing because now my whole family is doing good and I want to do good so that we stay together and never get separated again.

Well, late to The Beat Within.

- CrazyOne

From The Beat: Between the age of ten and fourteen you should have been just a kid, but at time our lives are not that simple. Now that you know the problems and your family are doing good, change your way of life so your family can stay together.

Don't Judge Me So Quick

Don't judge me so quick
Right away people judge me
when they see my arms
Thinking I'll cause crime and do people harm
Well maybe I will and maybe I won't
Even on hottest of days
some peoples hearts are still cold
Even though I pack a gun and run with thugs
I do stupid things but still I don't think I'm dumb
I gotta do something
'cause being locked up ain't working
On the streets watching my back
'cause enemys lurking
Wish I was gone 'cause I don't belong here
Every time I think about it death gets more near

- Canceled Identity

From The Beat: We at the Beat get the impression your arms have a lot of tattoos? You are right most people are quick to judge by our looks, and not for what we have to offer. It's sad but it happens more often then not. As for saying you don't belong here, we tend to disagree, especially if you are roaming the streets packing a gun.

Mi Abuelo Fue El Mejor De Todos

Mi abuelo fue el mejor del mundo. El me enseñó a trabajar. Me la pasaba trabajando con él en el monte con mis hermanos. Una vez mi abuelo se enfermó y se puso bien grave. Al día siguiente se murió. Yo estaba bien triste. Toda la familia lloraba porque era el mejor.

Luego yo decidí venirme para los Estados Unidos. La mala suerte fue que no había tren tubimos que caminar por 15 días para llegar acá. Yo sufrí caminando por las vías del tren por esos días.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho por la pérdida de tu abuelo. Tienes que darte cuenta que nosotros algún día vamos a tener que dejar este mundo así mismo como llegamos a este mundo. Tubistes un gran ejemplo en la vida y deberías de buscar la manera en como seguir esos mismos pasos para que todos te lleguen admirar como lo admiran a tu abuelo.

My Grandfather Was The Best Of All

My grandfather was the best in the whole world. He taught me to work. I would spend a lot of time working with him and my brothers in the fields.

One time he got sick and became very ill. He died the next day. I was very sad. My whole family would cry because he was the best.

Later, I decided to come to the US. The bad thing was that there were not trains heading this way, so I had to walk 15 days to get here. I suffered very much walking through the rails of the train for those days.

-Olvin

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss. You have to keep always in mind that we will have to leave this world some day the same way we came. You had a good example in your life and you should follow his steps so everybody can admire you the same way you admire him.

La Tentaciones

La tentación en las calles son los malos amigos y la falta de trabajo. Creo que para no volver necesito trabajar legal, no agarrar ningún vicio, y resignarme en no andar en la calle, trabajar duro, pensar en el futuro, y ser alguien.

Yo pienso que ya es tiempo de ir reaccionando en las cosas que hago, en no caer en malos pensamientos y sacar mi poquita familia adelante. Después de haber caído dos veces, creo que no quedan ganas de regresar.

La verdad es que no sé cual es el monstruo, no sé si he hecho cosas malas, no sé si son errores grandes, pero no pienso cometerlos de nuevo.

Lo que sé es que tengo que cambiar porque no quiero volver a caer otra vez aquí. No pienso volver a la calle. Creo que ese es mi monstruo que tengo, que no tengo control sobre mí. Enseñame a no ser el mismo de siempre y ser alguien diferente.

From The Beat: Bueno, por lo menos ya sabes lo que tienes que hacer. Todo lo que tienes que hacer es buscar la manera como mantenerte bien alejado de las malas influencias y malas cosas que te puedan traer a este lugar. Todo esta en ti. Tú decides que camino caminar.

Temptations

The temptations on the streets are bad friend and the lack of jobs. I think that in order for me not come back I need to work legally, not to get a bad habit, avoid being on the streets, work hard, think about my future and be somebody.

I think that is time for me to reflect on the things I'm going, choose to avoid bad thoughts and help my family out. After coming here twice, I don't think I want to be here again.

Truth is that I don't know what's my monster, I don't know if the things I've done are bad, I don't know if they are big mistakes, but I'm hoping not to do them again.

What I know is that I have to change because I don't want to come back here. I don't plan to be back on the streets. I think I don't have control over this monster of mine. Please, show me not to be the same as before and become someone different.

-Elvin, San Francisco

From The Beat: Well, at least you know what to do. All you have to do is to find a way to keep yourself away from bad influence and bad things that can get you back in here. It's all on you. You choose what road to follow. What's going to be?

Una Historia Remarcable

Esto me pasó hace 11 años desde que tenía 7 años. De la forma que esto paso fue de la siguiente manera. Era un 30 de abril de 1997, El Día Del Niño. Mi primo Javier abusó de mí y empezó tocandome mis partes íntimas. No hice nada hasta que cumplí los 8 años.

Yo trataba de decirle a mi mama pero él me tenía amenazada. Me decía que si mencionaba algo a mi mama, me iba hacer tanto daño que no lo llegaría a olvidar.

No dije nada hasta que tenía los 13 o 14 años. Cuando se lo dije a mi mama, me dió miedo que mi primo se enterara, pero lo hice. Todo el efuerzo no sirvió de nada porque hasta ahorita lo sigue haciendo como si esto no me lastimara o lastimara a los demás. Esto fue lo que cambió la vida, cuando el empezo a abusar de mí.

From The Beat: Deberías de hablarlo con tu familia otra vez o con un mayor que te pueda ayudar con esta situación. Lo que él esta haciendo es un crimen que te esta destruyendo tu vida. ¿Es esta la razón por la cual tu estas haciendo lo que haces? Si es así no deberías de hacer que esto pase. No permita que se siga aprovechando de ti. La proxima vez que lo haga, llama a la policia y deja que la justicia le haga pagar el daño que te está haciendo. Si esto te ha afectado sicológicamente, busca ayuda profesional que te pueda ayudar. Gracias por tu honestidad y esperamos que este consejo te ayude.

Remarkable Story

This happened to me 11 years ago when I was 7 years old. This happened the way I'm going to share it. It was April 30th of 1997, El Dia Del Niño (Kid's Day). My cousin abused me by touching my intimate parts. I didn't do a thing until I turned 8 years old.

I tried to tell my mother, but he had threatened me. He told me that if I mentioned anything to my mother, he was going to hurt me so bad that I was never going to forget.

I didn't say anything until I turned 13 or 14 years old. When I told my mom, I was scared that my cousin would find out, but I did. My effort didn't do a thing because he continues doing it as if it didn't hurt me. This is what changed my life, when he started to abuse me.

-Isabel, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You should talk about it with your family again or someone older than you that can help you with your situation. What he's doing is a crime that is destroying your life. Is this the reason why you're doing what you're doing? If so, you shouldn't let this happened. Don't permit him to continue doing this to you. The next time he does this, you should call the police and let justice make him pay for the harm he has caused you and continue causing you. If this is affecting you psychologically, look for professional help that can help you with this issue. Thank you for your honesty and we hope our advice helps you.

Toma Buenos Consejos

La vida es hermosa cuando la sabes vivir. Toma los consejos que otras personas te digan. Agarra los buenos consejos y deja los malos. Eso te ayuda a que tu vida sea más tranquila.

From The Beat: Para dar consejos, tienes que tomar consejos. ¿Has tomado esos consejos? Date estos mismos consejos a ti mismo. Lo necesitas.

Take Good Advice

Life is wonderful when you know how to live it. Listen to the advices others give you. Take the good ones and avoid the bad ones. That would help your life to become a calm one.

-Pedro

From The Beat: In order to give advice, you would have to take advice. Have you listened to any of them? Keep the same advice you are giving away to yourself. You need it.

La Tentación

Creo que la mayor tentación va a ser mis amigos, las drogas y la falta de dinero. Creo que voy a tratar de tener un trabajo, evitar de ver a mis amigos antiguos y hacermarme más a Dios.

Un monstro que le tengo miedo sería no encontrar trabajo porque necesito buscar como vivir. ¿Cómo voy a pagar la renta? ¿Cómo voy a comer? ¿Y cómo voy a ayudar a mi familia en Honduras?

Cuando uno queda sin trabajo, lo tienta más el Diablo en hacer cosas malas. Ustedes saben a lo que me refiero, robar y vender drogas.

Voy a conseguir un trabajo para tener mi mente ocupada, porque no tengo familia aquí en US.

Después de la mejor noche al otro día pase mi peor día con una resaca que ni la quisiera recordar. Sentí como si se me iba a reventar la cabeza del dolor. Me dolía todo. No comí en todo el día. Me la pase acostado. Quería estar sólo acostado porque si me paraba me arrojaba. Lo que arrojaba era algo verde y amargo. Fue algo que no deseo repetir.

From The Beat: Esperamos que cuando salgas puedas buscar un trabajo decente que te pueda ayudar a ser una persona independiente. Hay mucha gente que dependen de ti. Piensa en ellos despues que pienses en ti. ¿Sabía el numero de personas que han muerto por intoxicación del alcohol cada año? Ten cuidado!

Temptation

I think that my biggest temptation will be my friends, drugs and the need of money. I think I'm going to try to get a job, try not to hang out with my old friends, and get closer to God.

A monster I fear will be finding not finding a job, because I need to find a way to live. How am I going to pay my rent? How am I going to eat? And how am I going to help my people in Honduras?

When you don't have a job, you get tempted by the devil to do bad things. You know I'm talking about stealing and to sell drugs.

I'm going to get a job to keep my mind occupied, because I don't have family in the US.

After a good night, I spent my worst day with a hangover I don't want to remember. I felt as if my head was going to explode due to the pain. Everything hurt. I didn't eat all day. I spent it in bed. I spend in bed because If I tied to get up, I would through up. I used to throw up green and sour liquids. It was something I wouldn't like to try.

-Rafael, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you find a decent job when you get out, so you can become an independent person. There are many people that depend on you. Think about them after thinking about yourself first. Are you aware of how many people die over alcohol intoxication a year? Be careful!

Mi Vida Descontrolada

Bueno, les voy a contar un poco de mi vida. Cuando tenía diez años, empecé a usar drogas. Tenía mucho miedo que mis padres supieran que era un vago. Me la pasaba con unos amigos fumando todo el día.

En mi mente, decía, "quiero ser como ellos." Unos años después, conocí a otros amigos y me metí a las pandillas.

From The Beat: Pues se nota que desde que empezastes a ser influenciado por las drogas y malas amistades tu vida ha cambiado. ¿Ahora has mirado a donde esta vida te ha llevado, que piensas hacer ahora? ¿Seguiras por el mismo camino? Ya sabes las consecuencias.

My Uncontrollable Life

Well, I'm going to share a little bit about my life. When I was ten years old, I started doing drugs. I was very scared that my parents would find out I was a thug. I used to spend my time smoking with my friends all day.

In my mind, it would say, "I want to be like them". A few years later, I met other friends and I got into gangs.

-Fidel

From The Beat: It noticeable that ever since you got yourself involved into drugs, and bad friends, your life has changed. Now that you have realized where this lifestyle leads to, what do you plan to do next? Will you be in the same roads? You know the consequences.

Una Memoria Que Me Asusta

La verdad es que no sé lo que me asusta el día de hoy. Todo me asuta, pero creo que poco a poco ire perdiendo ese miedo. Le pido a Dios que me ayude a comprender lo que no comprendo.

El temor que tengo el día de hoy es pensar y pensar. Yo le tengo miedo a Dios y andar haciendo cosas malas.

Tengo miedo en volver hacer la cosas malas, me da miedo tener problema, me da miedo engañar a las personas. Todos somos iguales y creo que lo mejor es asercarse a Dios porque primero esta la justicia de arriba que la de abajo.

Si tu animal desconocido pudiera hablar. No tengo ninguno pero si tubiera, diría que soy muy malo, que soy un tonto que no hace caso y que algún día tal vez aprenda lo que necesito aprender. Diría que Dios es bueno, que me sigue dando oportunidades.

Yo pienso que es correcto que aprovechar todo el tiempo perdi. La vida solo es una. Mis amigos, debería de pensar el día de mañana.

Espero que todo me salga bien.

From The Beat: ¿Qué es lo que te está haciendo hacer malas cosas? ¿Hay alguien quien te esté forzando a hacer las cosas malas? Si estas haciendo lo que haces porque así tú lo decides hacer. Si decides hacer las cosas bien, también es tu decision y la correcta. Entonces está todo en ti. Sigue leyendo y tomando la palabra de Dios en serio y esperamos que te ayude a ser la persona que debes de ser. Una cosa más, para de estar tirando las oportunidades que Dios te da.

A Memory That Scares Me

Truth is that I don't know what scares me today. Everything scares me, but I believe that little by little I'll get rid of this fear. I ask God to help me understand what I can't comprehend.

The fear I have today is thinking and thinking. I fear God and doing bad things.

I fear to do the things I was doing, I fear having problems, I fear lying to people. We all are equals and I think getting closer to God is the best for all. Before all, we need to fear the justice from above.

I don't have a pet, if I had one, it would say how bad I am, that I am a dumb that doesn't listen and that someday I probably learn what I need to learn. It would say that God is good and that He's still giving me opportunities.

I think the right thing to do is to enjoy the time I've lost. Life is only one. My friend, you should think of tomorrow.

I hope everything goes well.

-Elbin

From The Beat: What's making you do bad things? Is there someone forcing you to do the wrong things? If you're doing what you're doing is because you decide to do what you do. If you decide not to get into more trouble, that your choice and the right for you. So, it's all up on you. Keep reading and taking the word of God seriously and we hope He helps you become the person you need to be. One more thing, stop wasting God's opportunities!

After a good night, I spent my worst day with a hangover I don't want to remember.

I need to learn not to drive without a diver license and not to trust others.

El Tío Luis

Un viejo en mi familia es mi tío llamado Luis. El es muy alegre. Vive una vida normal. A todos en mi familia le cae bien, a los vecinos y a los demás. Por su modo de actuar lo hace divertido, a pesar que ya tiene sus años.

Sus hijo lo admiran. Sus niño le gusta irlo a visitar apesar que vive unos 20 kilometro de la capital. A ellos les gustan esos viajes porque saben que se van a divertir mucho. El los espera con mucha ansias. Le agrada que lo visiten, los niños se divierten. Por eso es que se le tiene tanto aprecio. A él le agrada que lo queramos tanto ya que él se ha ganado ese cariño. El está en una buena condición médica. A su a su edad él es muy activo. El labora en los campos de la cosecha de frutas y verduras. El cuida muy bien de su pequeño rancho llamado Rancho Grande.

El viejo tío Luis es un poco alto y eso hace que se vea malo, pero en realidad es una de las personas más bondadosa que he conocido. Por eso lo recuerdo bien y le tengo tanto aprecio. Esta es una historia del viejo tío Luis que es único para mí y mi familia.

From The Beat: Que bien es tener a una persona con ese tipo de reputación. ¿No te gustaría ser como tu tío, una persona muy admirable? Deberías de tratar de ser como él para que tus futuros sobrino hablen bien de ti como tú hablas de él.

My Uncle Luis

A good old friend in my family would be my uncle named Luis. He is very happy. He lives a normal life. Every member in my family, our neighborhood, and many people like him. His way of acting, makes him funny despite he is old.

His sons admire him. His grandchildren like to visit him even though he lives 20 kilometer away from the capital. They like those trips because they know they are going to have fun with him and he waits for his grandchildren with much desire. He likes getting visits and the kids have a great fun. That's why we appreciate him very much. He likes the love we have for him, something he has gained very well.

He's in a good health condition. Being as old as he is, he's very active. He works in the fields planting fruits and vegetable. He takes care of his little Ranch called Rancho Grande.

My old uncle Luis is very tall, and that's what makes him look bad. In reality, he's the most beautiful person I've ever met. That's why I think about him a lot and I have much love for him. This is a story of my uncle Luis, a person unique for my family and I.

-Josue

From the Beat: It's good to have a person in your life with such as positive reputation. Wouldn't you like to be like your uncle, an admirable man? You should try to be like him, so your future nephew could talk about you the same way you are talking about him. Wouldn't that be fun?

Por Andar En Carro Robado

La verdad es que no sé como explicar el porque me agarraron. A mí me agarraron por andar en un carro robado. Les voy a contar lo que me paso, el por cual estoy aqui, aunque no sea la pregunta que me estan preguntando. Yo andaba con mi primo haciendo un mandado. Mi primo tenía que ir a otro lado y yo fui a rebelar unas fotos a la Walgreen.

Yo estaba parado en la estación del bus y pasó un amigo que había conocido. El pasó en un carro bonito y le dije que si podía dar una vuelta en él. Me dijo que sí, pero él se quedo esperandome en la estación del bus. Yo me fui a dar una vuelta y se me pego la policia atras. Me paro y me preguntó que si tenía licencia y le dije que no. Me preguntó que si el carro era mío y le dije que era de un amigo. No sabía donde vivía. El carro era robado. Me pusieron cargos y por eso estoy aqui.

Lo que tengo que aprender es en no andar manejando sin licencia y no confiar en los demás.

From The Beat: Creo que ese fue un gran error de tu parte. Estamos seguro que esta experiencia te ayudara a no confiar en las personas que no conoces bien. Esperamos que te enseñe a esta experiencia aprender lo que debes de aprender. ¿Lo haria otra vez?

For Being In A Stolen Car

The truth is that I don't know how to explain how they got me. They locked me up for driving a stolen car. I'm going to share how it happened, the reason why I'm here, even if it's not the answer you would like to hear. I was with my brother doing something. My cousin had to go the opposite way and I had to get some pictures developed at Walgreen.

I was standing at the bus station and a friend of mine drove by. He was driving a nice car and asked him if I could drive it. He accepted, and he stayed at the bus stop while I drove around. While I was driving a police car came from behind. He pulled me over and asked me if I had license and I say no. He asked me if the car was mine and I told him that it belongs to a friend of mine and I didn't know where he lives. The car was stolen and they charged me with that. That's why I'm here.

I need to learn not to drive without a diver license and not to trust others.

-José, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think this was a big mistake from your part. You should know who your friends are before trusting them. We hope this experience teaches you what you need to learn. Would you do it again?

Mi Querida Madre

Mi vida ha sido muy dura. Desde pequeño no he tenido padre. Desde pequeño he crecido en drogas, usando armas, me hice miembro de una pandilla, y me dedicaba a robar a toda la gente.

From The Beat: ¿Y ahora que ya sabes las consecuencias de esos actos, como ves la vida ahora? Creemos que ya es tiempo que busques la manera en como buscar la forma en como enfocarte en cosas positivas que te lleben a un mejor mañana. Lo que has hecho en tu vida no ha sido mas que perder tu tiempo. ¡Piensa con la cabeza!

Dear Mother

My life has been a hard one. Ever since I was little I have had a father. Ever since I was very young, I have grow up surrounded by drugs, experimenting with weapons, I became a member of a gang, and I dedicate my time robbing all people.

-Douglas

From The Beat: Now that you are experiencing the consequences of those changes, how do you view life? We think it's time for you to start looking for way to focus yourself into positive things that can guide you to a better tomorrow. All you've done in your life has been a waste of time. Think with your head!

Last Of A Dying Breed

I'm from the streets of San Francisco, da gutta.
 I grew up in a full house, and I ain't talking 'bout sisters
 or brothers
 I'm talking rats and roaches. Sleep in da day, up all
 night.
 Rats' shadows moving through candle lights.
 Mom out chasing crack pipes.
 So before looking at me, better think twice.
 I'm nothing nice coming from a life so trife.
 Dinner time, sugar-butter-rice, bologna nights.
 Now that I'm older, I think into my future like
 "Damn! When my main girl ask of my past, what am I
 going to be like?"
 I ain't seen nothing nice.
 Been spared twice, nearly lost my life (all thanks to
 God).
 Lost family to dis life.
 Had a lil' girl, got to teach her right.
 That's when I turn it over to Christ
 'Cause all I seen was lonely nights.
 Hopefully he blind her wit' da light
 So she would never see the past of my life
 Where I wouldn't hesitate to take a life.
 But dat's my past.
 Due to my lil' girl, I'm a changed man,
 Last of dying breed.
 All thanks to Christ. God sets you free!

-Dan'te

From The Beat: Even though we had to take out the entire first part of this tight poem (because it crossed the line of boasting about your turf and threatening others), we still gave this piece a POW for the power of your descriptions, both of the shady life you've had to grow up in and of the positive life you plan to carve out for your future and that of your child. You have a lot to overcome, but you also have some God-given gifts that allow you to overcome that past. You have a fine mind, a faith that should sustain you, and a child that binds you to the future. By living your own life as a responsible adult, you will give your daughter the model she needs to make her own life worthwhile. You have the power to do it. Now, do it!

God's Forgotten

It's one of those lonely empty hours
 Where all the pain seeps through
 Where there is no thoughts of comfort
 Not even thoughts of you
 No trust in anyone
 Earth is where I'm running from
 Inner turmoil burning deep
 Yearning for eternal sleep
 There above
 Maybe a God of love
 Just not one that loves me
 Doesn't want to waste his grace
 To set my spirit free
 I'm empty, I'm hollow
 Where I go misery follows
 My heart and soul are being consumed in agony
 Just another tragedy
 Life goes on as I stand still
 Is this really what they call "God's will?"

-Friskie

From The Beat: This is a profound question that has troubled the minds of religious scholars and philosophers forever, for who can know God's will? But we cannot believe that He singled you out especially to deprive you of His grace... Stop "yearning for eternal sleep." It will come soon enough, whether you yearn for it or not. Maybe some of the emptiness you feel could be filled with activity, especially in a social setting. Maybe you should wait a few more years before you try to understand God's will, because that understanding tends to change as our experiences change. So broaden your base of experience.

Yearning

A burning passion inside my soul
 A longing for fulfillment yearning to be made whole
 Illusions of love come and go
 But no real love I've come to know
 Loneliness consumes each day
 Clouding my mind, making it gray
 An intelligent individual
 But being locked up has become habitual
 Writing is my form of expression
 And breaking through these chains of oppression
 I yearn to learn
 And teach to reach
 My fellow peers
 That are dying just to live growing up on these streets
 Striving for success
 Just to find defeat
 Forced to be strong
 When we are still fragile and weak
 Living in chaos
 Surrounded by insanity
 Willing to do anything
 To win the love of my family
 And conform to society's standards
 Of ideal vanity
 It's a struggle, a battle
 Your mind it will rattle
 Remember beauty tha beast
 My life's chaotic to say the least
 If I can't handle it now
 How will I handle it upon release?
 People say you must believe in yourself.
 Before you can love someone else
 But self-hatred is hard to reverse
 Before you end up in a hearse
 Where there would be no feeling, no hurt
 No strife or need for words
 I'm a woman with a powerful mind
 But my light is too dim to ever shine
 Grew up committing crimes
 Serving my maximum confinement time
 They don't want me on the streets
 But soon I'll be released
 There's no longer anything they can do or say
 To keep me locked away
 After spending so many years
 In this corrupt system
 I wish I would've just taken the time to listen...

-Friskie

From The Beat: Your wishes for a different past are grounded in your fear of the future. But fear is not necessarily a bad thing. It suggests a more mature and realistic assessment of what lies ahead, and in that maturity we think you are more capable of dealing with what is coming than you realize. Of course, we cannot promise that everything will be all right (it's never that way, for anyone). But we can say that you have some truly remarkable gifts of insight, analysis and self-expression that may make your transition to responsible freedom easier than you expect — if you can avoid the traps that low self-esteem often set for you, like falling in love with a man who cannot care for you, or falling in love with drugs that can only destroy you. You know there is always a place at The Beat for you, and we know that there are many services available to you to help you find employment, housing, counseling and support. We hope you are as bold in seeking that help as you are in describing your life.

Best Friend's Death

Chillin' wit' my man
 Phone keep ringing off da hook
 It's a blocked number
 But I finally answer
 It's the hospital
 They're asking me to come in
 To come in and identify my best friend's body
 I stay silent
 They ask me if I'm still here
 I say I'll be there in 10 mins
 I enter da door
 Not seein' nothing but my own two feet
 They direct me to da morgue
 They open da drawer
 Then I see his face
 He looks like he sleeping
 But I know he's really dead
 I leave da hospital
 Drive home
 My mind's in a daze
 I can't believe he's gone
 Thought we'd be together to the end
 Ride or die
 No matter what
 But now he's not here
 I'll never hear his voice
 Never see his face
 Never feel his touch
 Again in my life
 I miss you boy
 Can't wait till my time
 So when I see you in heaven
 Together we can fly.

-Kayos

From The Beat: This sad remembrance of another tragedy of youthful death comes close to capturing the reality of its permanence, the life-long hurt it leaves behind. We say "comes close to capturing" because the power of this reality cannot be conveyed in words alone. Don't hurry your reunion with your friend. If he's where you imagine him to be, then time means nothing. But where you are, time means everything. It's all you have. Use it well.

Life

Life, life, life! Life can be very good or very bad, depending on all the choices you make. I think life is great, but at times it can be rough or challenging. Being locked up has been an experience that has made me think about life in general. Not having the freedom to do what you want sucks, but when you do get the freedom, you definitely need to make some sacrifices and watch what you do.

Life is too good and too short to be locked in a facility. I have a loving family, play sports, a great girl friend. I'm never coming back to this place again. I know that once I get out, I'm going to have to make sacrifices and good choices. It's definitely going to be a challenge, but I know I could make it through it. There's nothing in the world I have not been able to handle or make it through. I know I'll make it through this mess! I learned my lesson!

-Chad

From The Beat: Becoming a responsible adult means knowing when we have to sacrifice our desires for instant gratification for a longer-term benefit (a decent life). It's clear to us that you have matured into that responsible adult who understands the challenges that lie ahead, and is ready to make the hard choices that lead to that future we all want. We think you are up to the task, but more important than what we think is that you think you are up to the task. Keep learning, keep teaching, and keep making it through!

Illusion

I have illusions starting a fresh start
 I wish upon a star
 My life wouldn't be as difficult as it is
 People seem to do a lot of judging nowadays
 It's funny 'cause they claim they can relate
 The difference is we are two different souls
 Both have knowledge
 But apply it in a different way
 They say it's easy to change
 And they got all kinds of experience
 But who are you to say dat you have any idea
 What my life is like
 Dat you feel my pain inside
 You quit da game I'm still living
 I can't seem to run away from
 I say it's easy to stop hustling
 And dat dis will only take me to da pen
 But as I'm sitting here thinking
 I bet you don't really know why I do what I do
 I want to live a happy wealthy life
 Living check to check
 Not having enough for another meal
 Family struggling to get by
 And who's to blame
 I want to change but in reality not all da way
 You don't know my reasons
 My life runs a fast pace
 As I take every step, not knowing if it will be my last
 breath
 People claim to relate
 But how can you when you don't even know me
 You don't know my struggle
 All da tears I shed
 And made it this far
 All da heartaches I taken
 I'm young but live a grown life
 While people think it's all fun and games
 Their whole goal is to get high and drunk
 While mine is to get more then I have
 Don't get me wrong I still post up an' blow
 But reality is I'm a independent female hustler
 People hate all around trying knock my hustle
 But reality is I do this to better
 Myself and bring my folks up
 When da struggling done
 Then I'm done
 It's a temporary daze I'm in
 But as I always wished dat I didn't have to live life like
 this in the first place
 Everything at da palm of my hand
 Sad thing is my life is like dis...

-Giggles

From The Beat: What's sad to us is that you believe your life has to be like this. The reason that trying to hustle in the fast line is wrong is not just because it is usually against the law, but also because too often it leads to an early end, losing everything. Far better to defer your desires by building the foundation you need to reach them — by taking it step by step, finishing school, working a legit job, avoiding fights and other roads to ruin. Yes, it's slow. It can even be boring sometimes. But it pays off in the end.

Images Of Life

Image after image comes to mind
 Da sad reality is dat it brings me alive
 We got corrupted, shhh all over
 It's hard to explain what I was exposed to at a young age
 It brings chills up my spine
 I wish I could just shut my eyes
 Instead I see nine months pregnant knocks smoking crack
 I see lil' girls giving it up just to get a hit
 Of da glass dick they can't put down
 I got my homeboys losing their lives
 I look in da mirror and I wonder what's next
 I can't keep cheating life
 It's like I'm myself's worst enemy
 Females getting raped
 Old ladies getting killed an' robbed
 The government trying to play us
 An' we ain't even aware
 Nobody to protect da kids
 From dis game we call life
 Where nothing is really what it seems
 My city is running a mvp
 We got prostitutes, pimps an' homeboys
 On every street corner
 We got da biggest population in jails and prisons
 Point is we think we getting money
 But we really getting milked
 It's shady dat what I speak is so true
 I want to wake up from dis nightmare I can't seem to escape
 I seek da door
 But it's almost as if it don't exist
 I'm trapped in dis hole
 As I try to climb out, the hole is getting even deeper
 My worst fear is dying an unforgiven sinner
 You see I'm da monster
 I'm da one selling dope
 Serving fiends and gang banging on a daily basis
 I try to stop
 I got too much hopes and dreams
 But they seem to wash out as fast as they come
 My mind drains into evil
 And I go do what I know
 I have one foot on da right side dat wants to go to college
 And a foot on da wrong side dat wants to keep selling dope
 It's like I can't let go
 My mind does
 But my heart doesn't
 I'm a fiend to da lifestyle I'm so used to live
 Temptation gets da best of me
 I wanna live a normal life
 But as I wake up I'm reminded dis fantasy
 Will never come true.

-Giggles

From The Beat: Never is a very long time, Giggles. You don't know what's around the next corner. It could be the very experience you need to put down the lifestyle that you know leads to death once and for all. (We cannot predict the future, either.) You call yourself "da monster," but we don't see it that way. We see someone with a conscience who is doing what she was schooled to do (the school of the streets), but who is too smart not to want something different, something better, something that lets her use her dark experiences to enlighten the lives of others, and keep them from going down the same dark roads. You have so much to offer (and so much going for you), that all we can do is beg you not to give in to the temptations for instant gratification (whether of money, of drugs, of sex, of violence), and to make the sacrifices you know you need to make to pursue the real dream that drives you: An education, a decent job, a family of your own. These dreams are not fantasies... unless you allow them to be.

Trapped In A Memory

A little girl trapped in fear
 Alone and afraid
 Unable to shed a tear
 Trapped in a memory of pain
 Left battered and abused
 Consumed by shame
 Feeling taken advantage of and used
 It rains
 This little girl just wants to blow out her brains
 What could bring a young child to these measures
 Being robbed of her dignity which she treasured
 Remembering how it felt, the disgrace
 Now I hate the male race
 Inside I'm dead with a naked face
 Alone in this world knowing I have no place
 The horrific memories flood my mind from time to time
 Burning out my light so I'm unable to shine
 Remembering the pain, as I laid in defeat
 As this predator found pleasure in making me weep
 Crying and screaming unable to speak
 Raped and beaten black and blue
 A little girl that didn't know what to do
 Hurting, suffering in agony and rage
 Represented by the tears falling on this page
 A young child
 Beautiful tender and mild
 Taken advantage of and then grew up to start living wild
 Now with probation and parolee files
 The memory is engraved in my soul
 Causing me to become the way I am bitter and cold
 But even years later, I'm still that little girl
 Afraid of being alone in this dangerous world.
 Haunted and broken
 The wounds are still open struggling to heal
 And forget the pain that's all too real
 I'm just so sick of having to feel
 Living in anguish screaming inside
 Stripped of all my dignity and pride
 I'm trapped in a memory trapped in fear
 Even after all these years
 I'm still blinded by the tears

-Friskie

From The Beat: While we celebrate your great gifts (which we've spoken about before), we shed our own tears at what has been done to the little girl that you still are. No one can undo the past. It is a part of who you are and who you will always be. But it is only a part. There is something else, much deeper, that is also you and will always be you — and that part is intelligence, sensitivity, a strength that even you don't realize you have, and innocence (yes, despite all that has happened to you and all that you have done, you still radiate innocence). Friskie, you are NOT dead inside. You are vital, alive, warm and fighting for life! Keep fighting, using every advantage you possess to become the decent woman that grows out of the decent child you were (and are), despite all the efforts of all the miserable men in your life that have tried to corrupt that decency. You CAN do it!

*Afraid of being alone in this
 dangerous world.
 Haunted and broken
 The wounds are still
 open struggling to heal*

Why I Live

"Why live?" she asked
 "Why even bother?" she says.
 "To see the flowers
 To see your love's beautiful face
 To help others grow up
 To be there for people in need,"
 I replied.

"But Why?" she says again.
 "I don't care about all that."
 At this I thought hard.

"To see so much pain
 And to feel it all.
 That pushed you to this edge.
 Why push others there too?
 Because I'm leaving so soon,
 You would cause so much pain,
 Pain that cannot be overcome,
 The pain of knowing,
 That their best was not enough!"

"You have a point" she said "
 "I fight this battle for indeed,
 In my heart I still have nothing to lose,
 But I'll do it for you."

"Thank you," I whispered as she ran,
 "For sparing me that much pain."
 Afterwards I thought long and hard.
 I realized this:

Life is in your own hands
 For only you to decide
 No one can make your life worthwhile
 Only you can make it so
 Choose and do so

But consider what it will do
 And choose and speak from the heart.

-Kage

From The Beat: Too often, the poetic quality of your writing — which we greatly admire — keeps us from fully understanding the points you are trying to make. Who are the two people in this poem? What is their relationship? How have they influenced each other, and how will that influence play out in their futures? If only you can choose to make your life worthwhile, what is the path that will make that a reality? While these philosophical musings are always interesting and often profound, they don't give us a sense of you and your life — past, present and future. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What do you like most and least about you? How did your circumstances lead you here, and what have you learned that will help lead you away from here? These are all questions that your writing rarely addresses. of what you like doing so that the two of you can remain together and free...

Doing My Time

I'm 'bout to go back to camp after 4 1/2 months of waiting to go back. Been here since February just chillin', kickin' it with the homies. Then went to camp in March, and was there until July, but came back for being dumb. I've been here ever since. But it's nothing just waiting to do my time and get out and put it down, 'cause these rats know, I can't stop, won't stop and will never be stopped.

-Taz

From The Beat: "Can't stop, won't stop and will never be stopped" is just another example of being dumb. Of course you can be stopped! (Look at where you are, and think about the thousands of people in prison for life!) But why wait for "them" to stop you? Why not act in your own best interests for a future without walls by stopping yourself? Or, you can continue to be dumb and live with the consequences.

Missing My Lil' Son

Today is a special day for me because my lil' son is three months old. Damn, I feel bad because I'm not out and I'm going to do one year. Hopefully I get out before he's one year old.

He hella looks like me. My wife tells me that he's cute just like me and that he cries a lot and that he eats a lot chales. I miss my lil' son. That's why I'm going to change my life style because I love him and I don't want him to grow up without a dad. Every day I look at his pictures and I get sad, but at the same time he makes me stronger and makes me not want to give up and keep on going. I just miss my lil' son. I love you Victor Misael.

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: If you break the promise you are making here to your son (if you don't change your life style, if you continue to allow others to cage you and make decisions for you), then you will be cheating Victor out of something that every child needs, but too many never have, and that is a real father. We can feel the love you have for him in every word. When you get out of here, just remember the promise you've made. Be a good father!

When I Die

When I die
 I don't want you to cry
 Just keep your head up high
 And keep your dreams to the sky
 'Cause in your eyes
 No, I don't see no lies
 You know what
 I love you so much

-Lil' Stranger

From The Beat: Keep your own eyes on the future and the decent life you can make for your baby's mama, for your baby, and for yourself.

Shadow Life

Death and taxes
 The constants in life
 But is it really so?
 Can death end what you have done
 And what would have happened?

They say with anger
 If you get mad at them
 You give them the power
 The same applies with death
 To die unprepared that is a great loss
 To die is a tragedy, yes it is
 But to die fearing death
 That is worse

To put others to pay for you
 In jail, in life or in death
 That is not living right
 Death has no power of its own
 Only what you give it
 If you live right then you don't fear death
 At least not for dying in and of itself.
 Only fearing what it will do to others

Death is always, it is bound to happen
 What matters is how you lived your life
 And what you did for others
 If one person thanks fondly of you
 Then you have lived a life worth living
 If not you live in the shadow of death

-Kage

From The Beat: How do you balance the worth of one person thinking fondly of you against the worth of another who thinks ill of you? If "what matters is how you lived your life," can you assess your own life, both to this point and where you expect it to go from here? Since natural death is a distant reality for someone your age (statistically), we hope you're putting as much thought into life, and how you plan to live yours, as you obviously are putting into the last chapter.

Trying To Get To The Top

I'm a youngsta playing the game,
 Kickin' it wit' the homies doing my thang
 Living my life to the end. Sometimes I wanna change
 But I just can't. I can't stop and I won't stop
 Until I'm at the top.
 We only have one life so live it to the end.

-Lil Cyko

From The Beat: We've read it so often we want to drop/"I can't and I won't stop"/Like children who think their words can change reality/And too often lose their freedom — or face the ultimate finality!/We hope you grow up before it's too late/Because it's what you do that will determine your fate.

My Brother's Rap About Life

When I was just into my teens, mama was single dat time,
 So I started being a bad boy doing those crimes.
 Then I ended up in Juvie. I was doing mah time.
 The time that I was doing was from June to July.
 While I was up in there I was thinking of changing my ways
 Coming home to mah family, staying home every day
 'Cause I love mah parents. That will never fade away
 I know the facts that's starting to change every little day

-Watson

From The Beat: This is a somewhat mysterious rap. Why do you name it your brother's rap about life? Is it different from your own rap? If you were thinking of changing your ways because you love your parents, what is preventing you from making those changes? Don't you think they deserve that much from you? What are the "facts" that are starting to change?

Life An' Death

Life is full of obstacles an' tests
 Life isn't always gonna be fair an' square
 We go through ups and downs
 We see smiles an' frowns
 Life is full of risks
 When a homie or a family member passes away
 We grieve on it an' save the memories
 Está duro (it's hard) dis thing we call life
 So many tears are shed y para que?(and for what?)
 Sometimes it feels like don't nothing change
 Problems an' struggles is what makes us stronger
 Da way I see it is live life to da fullest
 'Cause life is short an' den you die

-Loka

From The Beat: But what does it mean to "live life to the fullest?" If the way you live your life leads to enslavement, leads to handing away your power to make choices and decisions for your own life, then is it living life to the fullest?

Life

Check it mane. Life?
 You only get one
 How you feel about when your time is up
 How would you use the last minutes that you have?
 Death
 How you think that everybody gone remember you when you are gone?
 Do you think that it's gone be something positive or negative. Just think.

-Mr. Kaab

From The Beat: Are you more concerned with how people will remember you when you're gone than about how people think of how you're living your life today?

Your One and Only

It's almost we've been together
 Got locked up for a month and you haven't even sent me any letters.
 I see you have time for your homies and I know I could do better
 But I have to admit I feel in love con un perro (with a dog)
 Fell in love with the wrong vato, but now it's just whatever
 I shoulda been clever when I wanted to be a gangster,
 Broken heart, torn out dreams. It's almost been a year we've been together.
 Waiting for your letter even though I could do betta
 You act like a perro. Al I can say is whatever
 Shoulda been clever. Left behind being a gangster
 But it wasn't enough. I guess I'll see you later.

-Sadeyes

From The Beat: Most all of us have been hurt in love, one time or another. It is not the end of the world, though. You will find how little pain is left from this bitter experience when you find a man who respects and loves you. That will happen.

Hate

Why people Hate? Some people hate because they don't like how people act and how they are that's why some people hate.

-Aventura

From The Beat: What makes a piece of writing good is the examples you use to make your point. Have you hated? Have you been hated? Why? Telling us about one of those times is what we're looking for.

Sunshine In My Life

You are my sunshine
 Til the end of time
 Every time I think of you
 You make me shine
 You are all mine
 You are my sunshine
 I breathe you
 You breathe me
 We eat together
 We sleep together
 You bring me joy
 Just like a happy child playing
 With its favorite toy
 You are my sunshine

-Sybreea

From The Beat: Whoever your sunshine is (A child? A lover? A family member?), you can only have the life you imagine if you are able to stop doing whatever it is that let the system separate you. If you love this person as much as this poem indicates, it's time to make some personal sacrifices so that you can remain together.

A Sudden Loss

When I was about 12 years old, I used to be in and out of jail. And one time I got locked up for four months. But once I got out, I heard the worst tragedy of my entire life. We were in the car and I asked my dad where is my mom at, and all of sudden he started crying. He said she passed away.

I mean once I heard it, I felt like going crazy as if my dad was telling me a joke. But that's how life is. You have to take the good with the bad. I just wish I was there when it happened. And at times I wish that God would've took me instead of her.

-P

From The Beat: Losing your mother is one of the hardest things that any of us has to experience, and we're sorry you had to experience it this way. We're sure she would not have wanted you to go before her, and that she's looking down on you hoping you are making the right choices for a decent life.

I Hate Loving You

To be with you
 I'd do anything I'd give my life
 You take away my pain and eliminate my strife
 Looking into your eyes
 Gave me butterflies
 I just want you close
 Please say you'll stay forever
 Remember only
 You make me better
 We all make mistakes
 And at night
 Mine keep me awake
 Our love's like a fantasy
 Too good to be true
 To be so in love with you
 When you're away I'm empty inside
 Every day I cry
 Stay in my room and hide
 I don't want the world to see me
 'Cause they'll see that something's wrong
 My love for you is so strong
 I don't know what I can do
 To show you how much I really need you
 I've stopped writing letters
 Because they don't make me feel any better
 Days go by slowly
 Inside I'm hella lonely
 Heaven is you holding me
 Sometimes I don't believe you'll never leave
 I worry I might lose your love
 My one and only angel from above
 Even before we shared our first kiss
 I knew this is what they call happiness
 So why does it hurt so bad
 I don't want to lose you 'cause you're all that I have
 You promised me forever
 And said you'd make me better
 But since you've been gone
 My hearts in even worse weather
 Even though this love is true
 I hate loving you....

-Friskie

From The Beat: Things that seem "too good to be true" generally are. We understand the desire to seek your comfort in the arms of love, but we also know that it can be just another way to find answers for our pain outside of ourselves — in drugs, in the pursuit of fast money, in love. When "love" causes this much pain, it's hard to see how it makes you better. Do you respect that fact that he loves (or, at least has loved) you? If so, look to those qualities he fell in love with in you, and love yourself for having them!

Why I Hate This Place

I hate this place because they treat us like shhhh. They think we are all the same. They give us just a little food. We go to sleep hungry. They take us away from our families for some little stuff that we did, but they don't care. They are just trying to get their money.

I hate this place because we don't learn our lesson. I know what I need to do to stay out of this place, but I feel sorry for those people that have not learned their lesson and don't know what to do to stay out because they are probably going to keep on coming. If I could tell those people something, it would be don't listen to no one but only to people that wouldn't hurt you, and do your best at all.

-Chucky

From The Beat: We hope you hate this place enough so that you never come back! We also hope that you look carefully at the "little stuff" you did to lose your freedom, because unless you stop doing that "little stuff," you can be sure that the consequences will be the same or worse. Knowing what to do to stay out is not the same as doing it. Just a word to the wise.

My So-Called Friends

My so-called "friends" are the reason I'm here
 They got me smoking weed and drinking beer
 A friend is someone who offers you food not drugs
 Now I'm in here unable to receive any hugs
 I had a friend
 Who ended up dead
 He thought he was cool bangin' instead
 He didn't listen to what I had said
 Last time I seen him, he had lost his head
 He made a big bet
 Which got him in debt
 He told me what he repped
 Life is not a game
 So remember, it's never too late to change

-Lil' C

From The Beat: In the end, Lil' C, it's up to you to be your own friend. If others want to lead you into harm's way (by offering you drugs, by luring you into a gang, by tempting you to rob someone), then you have to be the friend (of yourself) that says, "No." You're so right... life is not a game.

I Want Her Back

It's hard in here for a pimp, having a beautiful girl at once,
 And she don't even wanna write you back! It's a trip.
 Especially for the one that you really love
 But on the outs you treated her like shhh
 And you wish you could take it all back and show her how much you care,
 And still she says she loves you without any despair,
 You wish you could be out there to have her back,
 But for now you just have to sit and kick back!
 It sucks! But one day soon you will be together once again....

-Young Crab

From The Beat: You treated her like shhh, and you wonder why she doesn't write to you? If you were out there with her, how will she know whether your promise to change is more than just words? If you are "together once again," what changes will you make?

Can't Wait

I can't wait to get out. Kicking it with my boys is the only thing to do. Sometimes I chill, smoke a blunt and listen to the rain. I hang out in the streets when times are sad for me. I feel bad for my mom because she have to go through pain. Every time I break a rule it breaks her heart even more. And if I die I hope I listen to the sound of rain.

-Joshua

From The Beat: This little piece is like two different pieces. One focuses on you and what you like. (We'd like to hear more about your love for the rain.) But the other is about the pain you are bringing to the one person who deserves your respect and love, your mother! What are you going to do to keep her from going through this pain again?

Remembering When You Went Away

I'm here visiting your grave remembering about da day you went away. I went to your rosary. Saw you in a box. Couldn't help believe da homies I lost. Fell down on my knees begging God please. Tears just started pouring. You don't know how bad I wanted to scream wishing it was me. You were so young had barely turned 16. Two months later died January. Until today you're in loving memory. I'll always miss you mijo, but now God knew he sent you free. Now you're an angel watching over me.

-Unsigned

From The Beat: We don't know who wrote this piece because you forgot to put your name on it. Did this terrible tragedy make you want to do anything differently in your life?

Enough Is Enough

Enough pain! Enough hate! Enough with all the shhh. I'm tired of this place, these people. That's why I say enough is enough!
 These people (kids) don't know wha's up. They think they do, but they don't. They really got me mad now that I think that I will end up doing something that I don't want to do. But I always have to think about my family and friends because I get out in December, and I have to keep doing good because I'm tired of this place, these people (kids) that hate me for who I am. But enough is enough and I'm out of this place.

-Little Sneaky

From The Beat: Well, this place is not designed to make you love it! If you hate it enough to stay away from it, then it's done the job it was designed for. But whatever this punishment may or may not have accomplished, it's still up to you to make the right decisions in your life, not just for yourself but for those who love you. That's why we want you to keep thinking of the consequences to those people before doing anything that you "don't want to do."

Angry Lady

Anger an' hate dwell within me
 But no one can see
 The hurt inside
 Or when I cry
 Full of animosity
 At a dangerous velocity
 Step on my toes
 And we'll be throwin' blows
 I drown in rage
 As I'm locked in this cage
 My mind's deep like an abyss
 So enter if you dare
 And just be aware
 That I'm on the brink of insanity
 No longer into vanity
 Just dwelling in the pain
 My tears could be rain
 Consumed by shame
 Anger devours me and pulls me
 Beneath the surface
 They do this on purpose
 And make me feel worthless
 When I get in this mode
 I feel like I'm about to explode
 My body's workin' on overload
 My chest is pounding
 An internal alarm sounding
 I'm silently screaming
 My soul is bleeding
 No one sees the inner turmoil
 Even though the water's about to boil
 Inner calamity
 Driving me to insanity
 Roll of thunder hear my cry
 Come and save me before I die

-Friskie

From The Beat: Who is it that you are crying out for help to? We think that dealing with this "inner turmoil" by keeping it in is a big mistake. Stop "silently screaming" and start talking to people about your feelings who might be able to help you, if not directly then by referring you to other people who understand what you're going through and can offer ways to deal with it. Whether this is a psychologist or social worker or probation officer, find someone with access to services in the community, and talk to them about what can get you through this.

Inmate #90384

Habitual offender
 Not a pretender
 Just another poetic prisoner
 That receives no visitors
 Willing to love
 But full of hate
 So intelligent
 Yet barely managed to graduate
 Emotionally weak, intellectually strong
 Where is it that I went wrong?
 Committing crimes
 Doing time
 Advancing in the system
 Aware of all its contradictions
 Y.A. Number 90384
 I'm another number nothing more
 Soul survivor of incarceration
 I've adapted to living in complications
 Growing up writing to the Beat Within
 Releasing my pain, from living this life of sin
 Now I'm all grown up, close to being released
 Learning to act right
 So I won't become prematurely deceased
 I'm a product of the system
 I hate having to listen
 In the system's supposed efforts to rehabilitate
 They only make sure our soul deteriorate
 All I know is incarceration
 And the fact that I'm just another statistic of our nation
 Inmate number #90384 and nothing more

-Friskie

From The Beat: There are those in the system (not all) who might like it if what you say about yourself were true, that you are "nothing more" than your inmate number. But the truth is you are much, much more than that. "Learning" is the key word in this particularly powerful poem, Friskie. What led you to this life you describe is a way of living you learned along the way. What you learned, you can "unlearn" — or, to put it in more positive terms, if we are conscious of our lives, all of us continue learning until the lights go out. We believe that if you seek the support of others, you will begin to learn things (even about yourself) that will startle and amaze you, and that you will make the transition from #90384 to adult free citizen.

What Have I Done

I'm locked up away from my son, thinking to myself, "What have I done? I'm missing my son's birthday 'cause of my stupidity!" Now my son is suffering because he can't be with me now. I wonder when I get out is he going to remember me, or when he gets older is he going to forgive me when I get out?

I'm going to change my ways. I made a promise to myself and to him: I won't miss another day of his life and I'm willing to do whatever it takes to keep my promise to him and to myself just to show him I'm not fake.

-Justin

From The Beat: It's mysterious to us how a child brings such a transformation in a parent, but we have seen it many times. We admire you for recognizing what you owe to your son, and we appreciate that you have focused on his suffering rather than your own. We believe you when you make this promise of a different future, and we know that if you keep it, your son will love you for being what he wants and needs: a father.

Death

Death

A good friend of mine

Something I have to go through all the time

Mom told me, "I got tumor in my chest"

Not sure how to handle this mess

First time I was close to seeing death

Ever since then I've been so fascinated

So concentrated

On the next time I'm gonna see my friend

Who is gonna be there 'til the end

Took the victims of my step dad

But I wasn't mad

Because he told me not to get worried

Someday they would be properly buried

Next he took my lover

Overdosed on heroine, this time he had no cover

For the pain he caused me

The pain that will never leave me

But this death wasn't done

The game had just begun

He took the ones I was closest to

At this point I didn't know what to do

Just wanted it to be my time

Wanting it to happen at the drop of a dime

But finally he got me in the heart

And tore it apart

These are the people who are still alive

But in my mind

Could die.

-Charms

From The Beat: This friend of yours, this deathly friend/Takes us all and all we love in the end/But when it comes is no small thing/And how it comes depends on what you bring/Yes, it comes to one and all/ But by how you live, you can postpone the fall/A long life may not be everything/But it gives you so much more about which to sing/So choose wisely now and do what's smart/And live long before you part.

RIP

Life wasn't fair with me. By da time I was just a teen when I knew dis guy, he was only my boyfriend by then. The time passed by, I had a birthday, and he went to my school and say happy birthday. He gave me a bear and a note with it, and the note say, "Happy B-day, hope you have fun. I have something to tell you dat it might surprise you, but I have to tell you that I love you. Can you go out with me?"

By then I was shocked and wasn't sure about it. He was my homeboy and everything, I wasn't sure because he used to bang, and I was scared something would happen to him. I started knowing him more and more. I went out with him and he would always go to my school and pick me up with my homies. He had his own car and put my nickname in back of it.

We had already six months together and we loved each other real well. Until one night he went out in his car and we were there and other cars was in back of us. We got out and started a fight. I was fighting with other girls and the guys were also fighting.

Suddenly I heard a gun. My boyfriend got shot! They took him to the hospital. I was hella crying and I wouldn't talk at all. He was dead! The man that I loved, was dead!

I loved him and until now I still do and I'm trying to forget about his dead. Estuardo you will always be in my mind and heart and hopefully that from heaven you can see that. The gang was the worst thing that happen to him and now I hate the people that killed him. I love you Estuardo, always and forever.

-Lil' Angel

From The Beat: The stories of youngsters with guns are filled with the pain of loss — and the realization, too late, that death is permanent! We are so sorry that you had to experience this pain first-hand, but you are right to see that being in the gang not only didn't protect him from harm, it put him in harm's way. When you say you hate the people that killed him, we can understand why. But those people also have loved ones and family that care as much for them as you cared for Estuardo. Where will your hate take you? (What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"?)

Life And Death

Life and death

Taking your last breath

Dying to live

Living to die

No one knows why

But we know how it feels to cry

Death is like a disease

Killing off whoever it may please

Life is strife

Tryna figure out how to do what's right

Being blinded by hells fiery lights

Each day we live

We come closer to death

All fearing the day we're eternally laid to rest

Ready or not bewitched or blessed

The day we die

There's no coming back

That's it, that's all, it's just a wrap

Life is a cycle

Repetitive and never ending

So is our life worthless, expendable

And worth lending

To those on the streets who are befriendin'?

Juvenile life spent in the system

All because as a child I wouldn't listen

Dying from this life of sin

I've come to life again

And my voice is audible

Because of the Beat Within.

-Friskie

From The Beat: There are reasons you didn't listen as a child and went off looking for something you didn't find at home. Stop punishing yourself for that. Your voice is always audible, if sometimes a little muted and sad. We take no credit for your own re-awakenings, but we are proud to let your voice ring loud and clear in these pages.

Lookin' Straight Pelon

I saw you for the first time. You were with the homie going to court. I was the only ruca all on my own

I started telling myself, "Damn that vato he be lookin' straight pelon, I should ask my homeboy about his clone."

I started going to Central Dining. I saw my homeboys. They called him Chico.

But now if a jaina asks, "Who's dat vato?" I won't know what to say but "Stay off him! He's not mine and he's not yours. He's just a homeboy lookin' straight pelon."

I started walking down the hallways all the time trying to look good, a little extra fly.

You never know if I could see what you see all the time

But what I see is a good lookin' bald headed pelon lookin' straight into my eyes

I started feeling kinda funny, a little tingly deep inside

It's like if I finally found somebody that truly cares about my life

I barely met you and you already made me feel special, like I'm still alive

Smiling at me while trying to walk a straight line

But when I smile back, just know that what I see is a good lookin' bald head type of guy

A guy too good to believe in my crazy life.

-Sadeyes

From The Beat: Is this a case of judging a book by its cover? Besides his appealing bald head and good looks, what else are you looking for?

RIP To All The Fallen Soldiers

A soldier facing life who has changed his ways and became of Christ once told me, "Not to glorify all the damage and unjust things the 'hood has done, but when we were at our peak, we were definitely one of the biggest and baddest vatos around. "I feel I seen this statement portrayed in life in too many different ways. But, an incident that sticks out the most is the day a Pee Vee died...but in me was still alive. I was just into my teens and I couldn't believe it... I had just seen Aurello yesterday, received my blessings and today he was gone.

For those of you who belong to a gang, y'all may be able to relate to the amount of power and liberty felt when you're with your 'hood. Standing in front of a funeral, approximately 50 deep. The combination of who we are, what we're going through and what we are capable of, gives us that, "I-rule-the-world" feeling and can't nothing stop us.

To live a life of death as one progressively gets older ain't nothing easy. At first the attitude of I'm invincible has diminished as I've matured and stopped the use of drugs and alcohol. But I still gotta give the props to the block monsters out there who are cognitive of destroying their lives.

My 'hood ain't the same no more. But how long will the Beast sleep?

-Ogm

From The Beat: Even though you wrote the last line almost as a throwaway line, (and even though we had to change it very slightly), we think it's one of the most important questions our entire society should be asking: How long will the Beast sleep? Individually, it seems to get quieter as we mature, but collectively it rises up in each succeeding generation. By the way, that "feeling... (that) can't nothing stop" you is just that, a feeling only, as your RIPs make clear.

Carelessness

Me and the homie was chillin' in the hood getting faded on some Indo when some fools rolled up and regulated on us. I pulled the strap and started blasting at the marks as did the homie. After a few shots, my strap jammed on me so I ran to get some type of cover, but I didn't make it cause everything went dark all of a sudden

When I woke up, I found out from my baby momma that I was in L.A. General for being shot three times in the head (one bullet still in my head), one time in the back (left side), one time in the right arm, one time in the right leg, and grazed on my left shoulder. I had to be revived cause I had died three times and I had just came off life support after being in ICU for four months.

The homie was paralyzed from the waist down. I had to do memory classes, therapy and rehabilitation at Cedars

We're not supposed to bury our children, our children are supposed to bury us elders. That's a saying that we're hearing more and more as time goes on in this crazy world. And this next writer, though he glorifies things we don't think need to be glorified much more, shows he has a very real heart by writing an incredible rap for his son, who tragically is no longer with us. He's writing from the Polk Correctional Institution in Butner, North Carolina. And we just want to send our condolences for his loss. However, we also want him to know there are many young people reading this publication and looking to him as an example like they do the rest of you BWO writers. So, now's the time to redeem yourself of all the guilt and really get at the younger generation in a real way without putting such a risky lifestyle on a pedestal.

Sinai. I was supposed to have surgery done to remove the bullet after the wound healed, but I never did go back. I did get a chance at the people who blasted me and the homie. It felt good to smoke them squares cause they responsible for the paralysis of my homie and me being off with a bullet in my head. Do I have remorse for it? No, 'cause that's the life of a rider.

Son Of A Thug

(V.1)

Man son, I really miss you it's a vicious game
One shot it took a lot and it left pain

I wonder was it ya' mother or was it me to blame
While I was chasing the streets fame you wanted change
Is there a lesson here? Am I supposed to chase it?
Got too much stress on my chest I hope that I can make it
My son is gone I'm alone and I can't embrace him
Memories of you running around the house naked
Look in the mirror seeing you and you seeing me
You had a part of my humor and personality

A splitting image of daddy a lil' young me
Acting silly and laughing things to you was always funny
I'm flending liquor my lil' ninja you got me stressing
I'm wondering if I should finish my own life with a Smith-
N-Wesson

A future without you baby boy only got me guessing
I know you sending unconditional love above for me in
heaven

Chorus:

I guess this was a lesson for me
But dear God why they have to take my seed from me
I reminisce upon his love giving daddy a hug
Now don't you ever forget this, you'll always be a son of a
thug

(V.2)

My life was messed up the streets took my father
I had no one to set the example no one that I could follow
So then my mission was strictly about chasing a dollar
Gripping a Henny bottle looking for a female to holla
There's only one way out that's if you make it in
I got no doubts about meeting seeing my seed again
A concrete lil' souljah, but much mo than a friend
Teary eyed asking God, "Why did his life end?"
Trapped in the struggle facing trouble feeling hopeless
I'm hopeful he's looking down on me with a smile that's
why I'm so focused

My hands delivered the message, but my heart wrote it
The sun shines so I guess it's a sigh to cope with it
Past times they never fade away
Now there's a lot that's on my mind and a lot I got to say
My only option now is wait and pray
And live my life in such a way so we can meet on the
appointed day

(Chorus 2x's)

(V.3)

Ya memories will live on therefore I must roll
Playing the hard that I'm dealt so I will not fold
Seeing ya picture I miss you, I'm letting the truth be told
Pursing sanity and hoping I can keep control
Success is all that I see so I must excel
Only the strong survive so I shall prevail
Now while I'm sitting in this lonely ass prison cell
Contemplating fate and mistakes that might cause me to
fail

I'm dedicated to the cause so if I fall
I'm a rise gotta focus on the prize and take it all
Gotta complete this task there's no need for defeat
I know he's praying got his angels watching over daddy
You'll always be a vital part of my life
So when I stray I know you say, "pop it's time to get it
right"

So when I'm walking in the darkness you're my guiding
light
Promise my best and no less, I swear with all of my might
(I Love You)

(Chorus 2x's)

(V.4)

My son was the one to be, more than I could be
Educated and make it, be something I couldn't be
No CYA, Pelican Bay, but degree at USC.
Masters, doctorate, bachelors even a PHD
While I was inside he died and I cried cause he's my seed
If I could I would take his place and take that seat
Damn God it's hard and I'm scarred and it's hard to sleep
And at times I find my mind is dying for relief
I keep his memories dear to me, more than a friend to me
Son I appreciate the fun, but it's not the end baby
See, ya daddy trying to be happy, but it's not that easy
I was there when you was scared cause I cared and you
needed me
I fight at night cause life ain't right, damn it cheated me
Took the price that God sent with the intent to defeat me
Life goes on gotta be strong and move on cause shhh's
deep
On the real I feel like killing Jenny
(For real)

The Big Hit

What's crackin' Beat! It's the Assassin from the super max unit in North Carolina, but still holding it down for the west. Well, the topic today is the Big Hit. On Aug 27, 1997, my baby momma brought our son into the world. That was the most precious and special day ever because he was from me and plus he was my only known biological relative.

I was born in Trinidad (part of Spain). My momma died while she was in labor with me, so at the age of four, my pops, older brother and myself moved to Long Beach. When I turned five my pop got smoked and my older brother got smoked when I was eleven. Being that the homie Normandy quoted me on to the Hood at ten years old, they became relatives.

In 2003, I went to the East Coast to live with a patna of mines 'cause the police from LAPD was looking for me about two "187's" that happened in West L.A. while in N.C. for about four and a half months, I got incarcerated for four "187's" and for pulling twelve jack moves. Even though me and my baby momma had been split up, she came over here to support me while she lived with relatives until the issues were resolved.

On one of my visits she brought up the topic about us getting back together, but I wasn't trying to hear that 'cause we were old news and plus I was facing helluva time in the pen. She got mad and told me that I wouldn't see my son no more, which she told me before. But then she told me she would blast him then do herself. After my visit was over, I called her momma and told her what took place and she assured me that Jennifer wasn't serious.

The next weekend, I didn't get no visit so I called her relatives and found out that Jennifer was dead and my son was in ICU 'cause she smoked herself and blasted my son. The doctor said that my son would be a vegetable for the rest of his life with a severe case of brain damage if he stayed in ICU. I told her (Jennifer's momma) to hold off on the decision cause I felt like something might change with his condition. When I called her again she told me that she took him off life support due to the facts, I was incarcerated and her daughter was dead so the parental responsibilities fell on her. Then, she placed the blame for the whole situation on me. She told me if I would've never split with her daughter none of this would've ever happened. I asked her for an obituary of my son's funeral and she told me that she wouldn't send me one if my life depended on it and told me not to not call no more and then hung up. To me, forgiveness is not an option. Only a 187 will bring me closure.

Lastly, The song "Son Of A Thug" is dedicated to my son. "RIP!"

Real Talk

When it comes to surviving week to week
 The streets will teach you how
 We face hard times some time that leave tears beneath
 ya' brow
 So we look for answers in the sky,
 But get a face drenched with rain
 I never appreciate joy until my first dosage of pain
 My brain was trained early that early birds they get the
 worm
 The game's like a beezy with gonorrhea, play it raw you
 getting burned
 But I earned my stripes, the strip was lit up by gun
 fights
 Paramedics made it hectic played a part in my sleepless
 nights
 It ain't alright, my homie was hit with seven years for a
 single stick-up
 Feds knocked my homie for some keys right at his pick-
 up
 My ninja's wife got a divorce, he just couldn't put his
 magic stick-up
 Hoodsta's I feel ya' pain cause it's thangs that we all sick
 of
 Like being raised in the hood so all you know was the
 block
 And the first free ride in a car was in the back seat with
 the cops
 And you say stop, but I can't cause ridin' is in my veins
 Can you imagine holding ya' brother
 Shirt covered with his blood and brains
 Some fools never grasped the meaning of Genuine
 And the streets are not fake they'll take you before ya'
 time
 I witnessed open and closed caskets,
 Cremations and bodies unidentified
 We live to die and until it's our time, we all just standing
 in line
 Awaiting our arrival, but until then it's about survival
 What's the truth is it the Koran or is it the Bible?
 They say money is the root to all-evil, but that's what I
 follow
 And if it don't make dollars then it don't make sense
 Shhh that's my motto
 People don't understand where Hoodsta's are coming
 from
 Poverty is causing robbing spree's, the Feds seizing our
 guns
 Ya' would've thought the street war was done but yet it's
 only begun
 I guess this fight is one of those fights that truly cannot
 be won, huh?

*My brain was trained early
 that early birds they get the worm
 The game's like a beezy with gonorrhea,
 play it raw you getting burned*

The Anger I Feel

The anger I feel is so real.

The anger I feel had been ever so rooted deep down in my blood.

This anger feeling been something's that is so hard for me to get rid of The anger I feel started into my life at a very young age.

And this same anger has filled me with so much rage.

Making me sometimes cold and ever so bitter.

I have struggled with this anger feeling for so many years

And I have saw coming from my eyes so many tears
From the cause of anger feelings.

The hurt I felt from this anger feeling has brought into my life so much pain.

Pain that almost made me go insane.

Pain that hurt me deep in my brain causing a pain.

I could no longer stand,

But deep in my heart I know I had to be a man

And this anger feeling, had become to be a somewhat strong feeling of annoyance and displeasure cause me to damage parts of my youthful life that I missed out on,

And for years I did not have much knowledge as to what this anger feeling was, but years later I learned that this anger feeling was normal.

My father who I knew, but did not much about, but throughout his life to be taking away from him by a gun shot and at that time little that I knew, I had a long road ahead of me, with the anger I was feeling.

Anger feeling has drove me so many into the state of being a violent person fighting some people about some of the smallest things and these same anger feeling had me fighting with some people for no reason at all.

These same anger feelings even had me fighting against myself for so many ears. I shot and badly hurt so many people over these same anger feeling.

That have made me feel very bad about my action and these anger feeling was most of the time like a full fledge rage, but from a little studying about my anger feeling.

I came to learn that anger was a healthy human emotion, but hen these anger feelings get out of control and turn destructive that's where the problem comes in at, and I did not have any control over my anger feelings.

There was no space around my anger feeling. When I had reached the state of being anger and with my anger feeling. I was lashing out at every body and everything that irritated me and the only way I knew how to express my anger was in a very aggressive manner, but as the years went on I went to learning as I got more wise and mature, how to express my anger feeling in a more assertive was and while in prison.

I have many time's been taken out of the one man cell close management unit, and transferred to the mental health unit in union and treated for anger management and I picked up from some of the anger management groups, that the goal of anger management was to help people like me, to reduce my anger emotional feeling, and physiological arousal that my anger feeling caused me to be locked down in a one man cell for almost 12 years of my life, and so much more I have been through, behind not knowing how to control my anger feelings, that I have suffered with for most of my life.

Michael McKinney talks about God, he talks about love, he talks about anger, he talks about egos, he talks about passion, hell, he talks everything. And when he talks, we listen. There is something about his repetitive poetry that stands out to us. And when we say repetitive, we mean how he uses a catch phrase over and over again in any particular poem. We think this gives the effect of wanting to get a point across. Well, forget what we think, he's definitely been our most consistent writer so let us know what you think of him. He's writing from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida, and we appreciate all he's shared thus far.

Ego Minds And Ego Times

The ego mind, is one of a kind, my ego mind, has been very hard for me to keep it in check, and I have spent many years in a prison call Florida State Prison. Where there is so many ego minds trapped in ego times. Even the officers has big egos, and ego tripping type mind sets was all around me, causing me to also live on a ego trip, but before I even came to prison I had a big ego when I was young and growing up. I jus got worse when I went to Florida State Prison cause that prison was so close in and just about everything was done on the insider. So everywhere I turned I had to be faced with many other ego minds. That was trapped in these ego time's, which sometime made doing time very hard for me and the ego is a word that I have had very much knowledge sense I was very young, and in my Oxford American College Dictionary define ego as. A sense of self esteem importance, but the ego mind I'm speaking of. When I feel like I have to challenge everything, someone say or do to me and my ego mind, was always me against the system. I had no space around my ego mind cause my ego was out of control when it was rubbed the wrong way, and I saw how easy it was to get caught up into the egotistic prison mentality that lead to all sorts of suffering and mental changes and there has been so many times, where my ego mind, had done injured me. My ego mind had done defeated me, my ego mind deprived me, my ego mind kept me at war with myself, and the world that's around me, and my ego mind, made me very violent and rebellious inmate. My ego mind always had me fighting with other inmates, cursing out the guards and my ego mind is what made me a very angry man, and the power to hate and hurt others was an aspect of the ego mind. My ego mind kept me in situations that made me more miserable then ever.

Who Can I Trust?

Who can I trust other then God and myself?

Who can I trust to be a friend?

Who can I trust unto the end?

Who can I trust to be there?

Who can I trust to treat me fair?

Who can I trust to keep it real?

Who can I trust with my life and my soul?

Who can I trust to love me unto I grow old?

Who can I trust to wipe the tears from my eyes when I am treated cold?

Who can I trust to put my confidence in?

Who can I trust to share that closeness with who can I trust for some support?

Who can I trust from some true brotherhood?

Who can I trust to make me feel understood?

Who can I trust to past that ultimate test?

Who can I trust to give me they best?

Who can I trust to deliver me from being in bondage?

Who can I trust to be around?

Who can I trust with my crown?

I Want To See The Truth

The truth is what's going to set me free
 Living by the truth is living above all things.
 I know God would move the blinders away from my eyes,
 That has been keeping me from seeing his true nature,
 And my own true nature and I want to see the truth
 For what it really is and not for what the world want it to be.
 God is the truth, his way of living is the light and that's
 the truth I was to see.
 That's the way I want to be
 And the truth is what going to enlighten the eyes of my heart
 To see the riches of his glorious that I will one day I will inheritance.
 I pray that God heal my eye's to see way through the
 path of the truth. The world is full of lies and to a fool
 a lie holds more weight then the truth and it's a old saying.
 Which say's the truth hurt
 And when I was young and did not know any better,
 I used to get mad at the truth cause I was living against
 the truth. That's why I was never free
 'Cause I was living against they key to true freedom.
 Just know the truth and it will set you free.
 That's why I'm struggling to know to learn true
 knowledge of self.
 So I could free myself from the world with the truth
 'Cause for years I been living in the devils hands
 Of wickedness and trick knowledge
 And at that time of my life I was never free
 'Cause I did not know the truth.
 I was blind in to the ways of the world,
 But I constantly kept seeking the path starts with self.
 I got to get my life right with God
 'Cause so many untruthful ways of living and thinking
 Has held me down,
 But I have reach that turning point in my life where I
 refuse
 To be held down anymore cause I want to see the truth.
 I want to know the truth and I want to live by the truth.

Deep Within

Deep within me, there are a teacher, who schools me,
 and guide me. As God stands by me, this teacher with
 in me helps me to know when something is wrong. This
 teacher with in helps me to know when something is
 wrong this teacher with in helps me to be strong. When
 I feel I can't go on deep with in me I ask this teacher to
 guide my path and this teacher with in me, has taught me
 many things about myself. I thought I would never know
 this teacher hides somewhere deep with in my souls, but
 I know it's there, cause it embrace me with care deep with
 in my soul there are a place where peacefulness is found.
 Teaching me to humble myself without an sound.
 Deep within is the true nature of me driving me back
 to that nature which is the real make of me and man.
 Deep with in my teacher from the soul has taught me
 how to deal with people universally and not just on one
 level. Deep with in my soul I have so much control that be
 sometimes hard for me to use on the outside of myself.
 Deep with in me there are so much compassion which is
 always not put into action. Deep with in provide my inner
 self with protection.

We Both Know Better

Danielle Green, you know how I feel about you. And I
 know how you feel about me. That's why I say the both
 of us know better. When I was around you, you could
 not hide your true feelings for me cause in so many lil
 ways your feeling always kept manifesting, that you care,
 and how much you want e to be there. That's why I told
 you actions speak louder than words. Cause there have
 be many time's that both of us have said things to each
 other that we do not mean so I never took your wrong
 words to heart, but from what I read, in that long letter
 you wrote. That you sometimes takes to heart what I say
 to you when I am angry and I don't think that's fair cause
 you say you don't think we could have much with each
 other, other than business and you know what?
 Cause when I am mad, I say things you don't like and
 tell you how I will hurt you and Danielle, I feel some where
 deep down in your heart you know I will never do anything
 to hurt you and I have told you this so many time's. You
 know if I hurt you I will only be hurting myself. You are so
 beautiful, like a gift that will last forever you just young
 with a few silly ways so all the good things about you I did
 not miss and you ask in that long letter to me you said
 Michael, do you honestly know how to love? Yes I do. And
 you went on to say from your eyes I don't and Danielle,
 you said to love someone you got to care about them,
 Danielle you are right about that and you say I can't care
 about you, cause I get mad at you when I ask you to do
 something and you don't do it. Well you are wrong about
 me not caring about you and I don't be mad at you, that
 was my way of acting, when I be waiting to have a little
 fun with you, cause you had spoil me like that.
 When I act mad, you come back and let me have my
 way. Then we have fun you just had that way of bringing
 the child out of me, but you enjoyed them times just a
 much as I did, and that what's made you so special to me.
 It is you just did not understand the real motive behind
 my anger action. All the while it was my emotion running
 wild about you and you knew what time of day it was, you
 know I care about you, and you told me what love mean
 to you. Love, care, respect, companionship, attention,
 loyalty, honesty, and trust.
 And Danielle, you are right, but if you think about all
 this I done showed you I care. I done showed you trust,
 but you the one did not trust me, when I am mad at you,
 but all the other times we dealt with each other the trust
 was there and I gave you attention when you wanted my
 attention and if you wanted more attention you know
 I can't read your mind, and I noticed that you was real
 protective over me, when it came down to me dealing with
 other. That's how I knew that you cared about me when I
 needed something done you was always there to help me
 do it or you did it for me, and just the little things you do
 mean so much to me.
 You was just not able to understand how much you
 help meant to me, and you can't just pass judgment on
 me, when I am mad at you, and I have never stayed mad
 at you for very long. You are so sweet, unto I could never
 stayed angry with you for very long cause my feeling for
 you are very strong and thank you for sharing with me
 the meaning of agope love. That's another reason you
 have been so special to me cause we are able to learn
 from each other, and you say no matter what anybody
 says or do to you. You still love them, Danielle, you just
 can't say that you got to mean that from your heart, but
 to sum it all up, Danielle, Mike Mike, do care about you.
 The time has not come for me to show you how much I
 do care about you, but who knows that day may come. So
 just be ready Danielle, to show how much you are about
 me.

The Works Of Darkness

This world I have lived in has been so full of darkness, and also prison system are so full of darkness. Darkness are all around me, my heart search for light, but for years my dark conditional mind has leaded me down the road of darkness, and the works of darkness I speaks of, will only lead to self destruction, and that's one of the main reason I like reading the Bible, cause it warns me about all the many different works of darkness in this world, and I know the darker it gets the less I would be able to see the truth, and the truth is the only thing that is going to set me free from the works of darkness, and in this darkness there are so many hidden traps, but Psalm 91, 1-3 says "He will certainly save you from them traps or hidden traps. And from deadly sickness." And Psalm 91, 6 says, "You don't have to be afraid of the sickness that attacks in the darkness. And the works of darkness is what defile man." The works of darkness are brutality, anger, war, fighting, and greed. A corrupt mind is misery, hatred, holding grudges, fear, and insecurity. Power games ignorance. Envy is another great works of darkness. Envy the next person cause what they have, and I learn never have the desire to want what others got, cause that brings about envy, and that is one of the works of darkness. Never be greedy for gain of money, and many other works of darkness. And these works of darkness is what keeps a person from seeing the right way.

Love Is On My Mind

Love is on my mind and I'm not going to leave you behind cause when I think of you Danielle, agope love is what I want to find in you. You say you have surrounded yourself with agope love, which is the best love that can be found, cause you brought the meaning of agope love to my attention and I will learn how to use agope love for every reason. Danielle Green you keep love on my mind through out each and every season, and when my eyes was first layed upon you, I knew my eyes was leading me right, cause you was like love at first sight. You rapped my heart up so fast and my feelings was running out of control and with your love in my hands or at least I thought was, but I would leave that in the hands of the one that's up above. So if it is ment he will bless me with your agope love, and some good things in life is so hard to find. I found you, and I was so hook, I could not get over your nice looks. But our stay together was very short cause of my foolish actions which I now see where I have went wrong. Now I'm looking back over my mistakes singing a sad song, cause you never miss a good thing unto it's gone, and when it was time for me to depart from around you, I saw that sad look in your eyes, that you could not hide.

The Tongue

What I say out of my mouth does affect other's. So I no longer overlook the effect my reckless words have on me and others cause the tongue of the wise promotes life. So I try my best to let the words that comes out of my mouth promote good and not destructive, cause there have been time's when my little tongue have got me in more trouble then a little bit.

And from reading and studying the bible, I have came to learn that my tongue is a very small part on my body, that has great power for good and evil and the tongue must be tamed, which at time's have been something so hard for me to do.

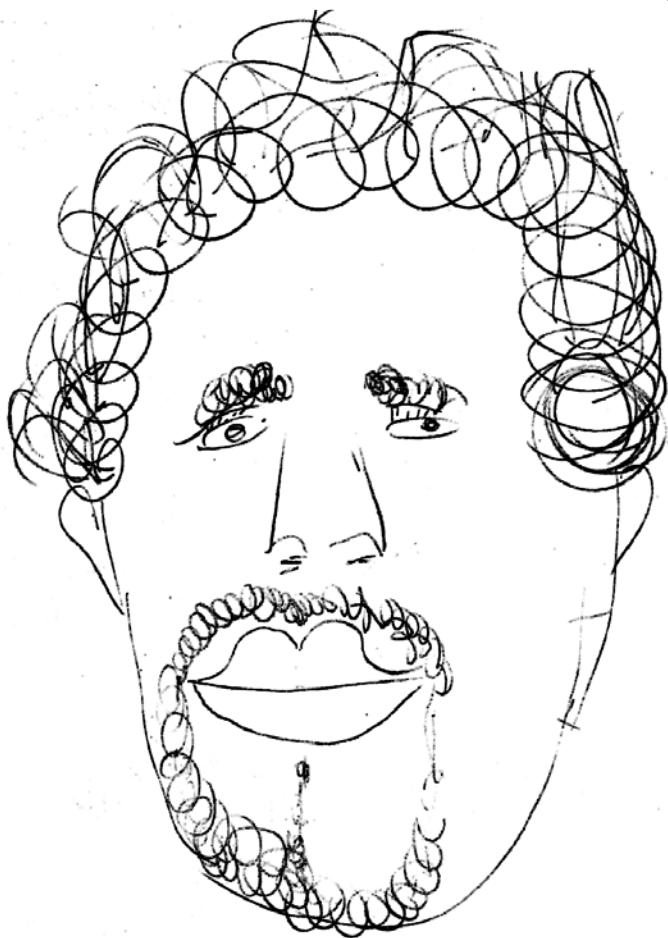
Hated By Many, Loved By Few

I am loved by few and hated by so many.
 Unto it's hard for me to keep up with the enemy.
 Many smile in my face and the same one's talk behind my back.

Just waiting to take my life away from me without cutting me any slack.
 The same one's smile in my face as if everything is all right,
 Are the same ones who wait on the opportunity to put a knife in my back.

Many comes in the disguise as a friend,
 But this is something they only try to pretend.
 To use me in some kind of way to they own adventure
 And when they see they can't do so.
 The hate in they heart for me only grew
 And them kind of friends I do not need.

Enemy are the one's I learn to trust the most
 'Cause I know what to expect out a enemy and the respect is always there.
 So I have more love for my enemy then I have for a so call friend.



Death

When I hear the word death, it makes me tremble. Automatically a chill goes up my spine and a tear rolls down my face. People say that you shouldn't be afraid to die but to be honest it scares the shhh out of me. I never thought of myself as living on the edge but in all actuality I was on my own way. I never sold dope or did drugs or anything like that, but I ran away from home a few times, kicked it with too many dudes, lied about my age and etc until death opened my eyes.

I was fourteen years old and my best friend and I used to always lie. Back then I didn't know how lying about my age could actually harm me. I talked to someone who was twenty-four years old, at the time that was ten years older than I was. But she talked to someone who was thirty, sixteen years older then she was. She ended up getting pregnant after being with him for three months. The day before she died she told me she was going to tell him the truth about everything. The next day she didn't go to school and her mom told me the police found her strangled to death in a public bathroom. No one knew who would want to hurt a child but I knew what happened.

Now I am seventeen years old and here comes death knocking again. Michael Price eighteen years attended Dewey Academy. He wasn't my best friend but we were hella cool. The Friday before he died he said Anastasia be cool sis, which meant have a good weekend. The next Monday I got a text saying RIP but I didn't know whom the text was about. Later that day one of my friends from school called me and told me to turn on the news. They said Michael Price my friend was dead. He got shot four times in the chest for not moving fast enough on an escalator. And when I heard that I stopped breathing for a minute cause I couldn't believe it. Then the tears hit me and I couldn't stop thinking about him, he wasn't only my friend we had two classes in school together. They say that the first death hits you the hardest so I couldn't understand why his hurt so bad. My grandmother died when I was young and I didn't even cry, my best friend died and I didn't go to her funeral but this

This next young lady has a presence in our office that can't be denied. She always knows how to make us smile and her "I'm a knock-out" attitude lets her beauty shine through. There has been a lot of people passing around the office and it's beginning to take its toll. When one passes, we all go through our own individual grieving processes, however it is also a time where we lean on others to get through life without the person who passed. And when a person passes his or her legacy lives on through us. And when a person dies young, they're usually leaving a whole lot of people who care about them behind. We respect this incredible young woman's opinion and now feel like we know her a little better. We didn't know she was this good of a writer and we appreciate her for sharing something with us that she holds so dear. She's writing from our office here in San Francisco where she assists in making this publication keep pushing week in and week out. We thank her for her time and efforts. You are an incredible person Anastasia...

was unbearable. It made me question everything I had ever done and known. But it didn't just hurt me it hurt my whole school, almost all of Oakland, and more.

What hurts the most was the fact that he was a good kid. He wasn't out there smoking, drinking, selling dope and everything else. He was at school with me, he was going to be someone and a fourteen-year-old boy took that from all of us. Then a man that I worked with the very next Saturday was murdered. I didn't know him that well but I felt for my boss since that was his brother and my girl it was her dude. I told my mom and she told me death comes in 3's. I thought about killing myself after all the drama but I realized how many tears I cried over those two weeks and how I would never want anyone to hurt or cry like that over me. How do I deal with death I really don't know? But what I do know is that I pray to god everyday that heaven is way better then this hell I live in and that he lets my heart heal before he takes someone else close to me. Even though people die around us everyday we gotta be strong for the people who are still living, and I believe that if you believe in God everything is going to be okay. Everyone I know has a part of my heart so instead of listing names all I am going to say is RIP (My Love) and y'all know who you are.

Dear The Beat Within

My name is Gerardo Rubio and I am currently a prisoner at Folsom State Prison. I wrote The Beat about five months ago while I was at the SHU in Corcoran. I sent a poem titled "Children of Tomorrow." I do not know if you printed the poem.

I do hope you print my intro "Mystic Conscience." I know it is rather different. You see I am in a constant state of mind paranoia and auditory hallucinations. I am a diagnosed schizophrenic. I take medications to help me cope with life, but it's not a cure. The voices I do hear, the voices I battle with everyday. Sometimes the voices take the form of demons and I do what I call "visual battle."

This is my second term in prison. Both terms have been a result of my mental illness. But my current term I am innocent of 2nd degree robbery. My only guilt is stopping to take my medication. Resulting in my schizophrenia to control my life. I received four years. I parole next year July 2008.

I have been suffering from schizophrenia since the age of 17. I have had multiple shock therapy and been hospitalized in countless mental hospitals.

My passion is to write. I like to write short stories and poetry. I am always trying to learn more. I hope one day to write a novel. So I keep practicing. The Beat Within sent me a copy of the magazine and I enjoy the poetry these kids write.

I think I can help these children by writing of my life behind walls. To encourage them to thrive and succeed in life. To the beauty and wonder of life and freedom. The misfortune and heartache of drugs and gangs. I have experienced all these trials and I am blessed to be alive.

I am still searching for the meaning of life, but I have discovered many beautiful moments in my 37 years of life on planet earth. If you print any of my material please send me a copy. I will be sending poetry and bios. God bless you all.

GERARDO

This next writer said he wrote a while ago but don't know if his piece got published. Well, here he is again introducing himself to The Beat family, which he is now a part of. He shares openly about being schizophrenic, which we really appreciate because we know many people that are incarcerated suffer from this. And if you don't understand it, this mental setback can be really hard to deal with. It makes your mind think things out of the ordinary to a point where you act on these thoughts sometimes. People with schizophrenia often hear voices and feel the urge to act on those voices. It's a pleasure to know that someone is writing us even though they suffer from this. So let's give him our full attention. He's writing from Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA.

Mystic Conscience

I marvel at the strength I possess when confronted by hidden demons that rule my chaotic world. Oh, is easy enough to ignore their wicked tales and evil ways.

What is unbearable is the silence that precedes a premeditated attack with so much aplomb it's frightening. These are not the conventional demons of biblical scripture, although I do see them as fallen angels. For they are rebellious by nature and despise all forms of authority.

Although these fallen angels are independent and armed with free will, they solely exist in my realm of consciousness. They are invincible and demand respect equal to those souls we call humans.

Therefore, creating mystical structures with words set down by thoughtful gargoyles with souls of histories past, I respectfully introduce you to my world of broken dreams.

In God's Image

Three are five major world religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. These world religions seem to be regional located with major Judeo-Christian influence in the west. It is estimated that 80 percent of the west is under Judeo-Christian persuasion. I link Judaism to Christianity because they share a common origin with similar doctrines; agree on the Old Testament and a Messiah will come with peace and justice. The other three world religions are concentrated in the east. For this reason I will concentrate on Judeo-Christian concepts.

One eastern philosopher once wrote, "To understand God, means understanding man." That is consistent with Judeo-Christian concepts, "so God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him male and female" (Genesis 1:27). Being in the image of God man has an eternal soul and operates on rational principles. Through conjecture we can imply that God is on an infinite scale, while man is on a finite scale. The fall of mankind from a perfect world to an imperfect world (mankind's morality with creation in chaos under influence of demons) happened in the Garden of Eden, This is summed up best in the Eves words to serpent, "for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and shall be as God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3; 5) this concept of moral duality of both man and God are summed up by God in "behold, the man is become as one of Us to know good and evil..." (Genesis 3; 22) This moral duality is a system of opposites; good vs. evil, truth vs. lies, love vs. hate, humanity vs. pride, peace vs. warlike, virtues vs. vices and so forth. Its binary thinking with no grey areas in ideological extreme Evil is like an alter ego of split personalities. This antithetical nature of both God and man is seen in the divine revelation of the Bible and the history of the human race.

The proof of divine relation lay in the miraculous or supernatural acts done by the messengers or prophets in the name, power, and authority of their God. L. Strauss concurs when he quoted Spinoza, "Spinoza says that revelation requires confirmation by miracles." (Strauss, L, 151). These a very wise words from a faithless man; talk about "out of the mouth babes." Spinoza considers miracles to be pre-scientific, superstitious, and is from a mythical mind (152). I think he would have done well if he sought out a miracle worker or messenger of God, before he drew that conclusion. How difficult could that have been? It's not like he had global Internet access as we do. But he has freedom of choice. The freedom to choose and reason unlike a robot that must follow programs or an animal that follows instincts. And there are consequences to that freedom of choice. This religious conscience in humanity is what prevents actions of a wild animal in mankind; this is very similar to Freud's ego (reason) and superego (values). These moral compunctions strengthens the social fabric in society. All cultures have some form of religion from the most primitive to the most advanced, so I can say religion is intrinsic to the human experience. There is a space in man's mind that only God can fill.

In Plato's "Euthyphro," a dialog between Socrates and Euthyphro focuses on the behavior of the Gods. Socrates says, "but wasn't it also said that the gods quarrel, and differ with each other, and that there are enmities among them towards each other?" (West, 49). Euthyphro responds to Socrates criticism of the prosecution of his father by using the gods' example, "Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, at the same time that they agree that he bound his father because he gulped down his sons without justice and that later, in turn, castrated his own father because of

This next writer tackles the incredible task of describing what he feels like is meant by "In God's Image," and man does he break it all the way down for us. There are many people that may take his opinions defensively, but all in all, they are his opinions. He mainly talks about Christianity since that seems to be the most popular religion out here in the United States, but he also makes reference to at least four other religions. He also uses a lot of quotes from the bible to make his point, and though sometimes we feel like this is cliché and expected, after reading we can see why he did so. Whether you're a believer in God or not, it's very difficult to not give what he's written a double take. He writes from Chicago, Illinois, though we don't know what facility he's in or if he's even in a facility. However, we try to keep our pages open to anyone who has something to teach. And from the looks of it, this next writer has a lot to share with us. Thank you...

such things...(47)"

These are very human terms. Does God have a penis? What does he do with this penis; sex? Urinate? Or masturbate? Do the gods war like men for what; conquest? Class warfare? The celestial spirit world of the gods is too much like our material world. Did God create man in His image? Or did man create the gods in their image? Clear from the Greek perspective there is little difference, or even moral superiority between the two. Socrates even gives the gods human jobs like doctors and health, shipwright, house-builder, generals, or farmer (58), in his analogies. I totally disagree with their ideas of God(s). God is infinite. God is a Spirit. And God has virtues. I base these primes on the evidence of creation and on divine revelations through the prophets. Humans are too limited to comprehend God totally. We can only comprehend a very limited amount of his characteristics or traits Plus the Greek believe in the pantheon of many gods. Which one does man emulate or consider being best? Which one is just or pious? Monotheism doesn't have that problem. The One God sets the standards.

God can be your best friend or worst, like the adages goes 'a prince needs to be loved and feared: both at the same time.' According to divine relation Lucifer "morning star" of Satan "accuser" was so beautiful and perfect that pride in him caused him to rebel against God, the Supreme Being, in a great war that took one third of Heaven's angels with him (Isa 14:12, Rev 12: 3-4, 7-9). Why God would even create such a superior being, since He would know Satan would self-destruct? Is God so bored that He needs a toy to play with? Surely he must have known God's Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience (Psalms 139), so why would he take that chance: unless he thought of God as too much good (love), thus underestimating God's true natures (good and evil). God's good side must have spoiled him. I imagine God's own creation trying to defeat Him, which do you think would be greater? In the grand design of chronology of destiny, Hell was created for Satan and his angels' eternal punishment and separation from God. (Rev 20:10). What do you think the other two third of Heaven's population taught about their God? He would even give them a second chance like probation after 200 millions years in Hell.

To advocate for God I would say maybe because of His angels' great intelligence and power, they should have known better. I mean being in such close proximity to God they could have just asked for advice or direction unlike humanity which can only experience God through the prophets' words and faith in prayers to an invisible God. It doesn't help Satan's cause because he attacks finite mankind to get back at an infinite God. The war between God and Satan rages on with humanity caught in the crossfire; which will only end with second advent of Christ But at least He gave mankind a second chance with atonement of sins (Gen 3:15, Luke 22:19-20), instead of being sinners in the hands of an angry God forever doomed to Hell's punishment. The prophets call that love, mercy

and grace.

Let us look in to how the Infinite God treats finite mankind. In the Old Testament He states mankind should not be killed, because he is made in the image of God (Gen. 9:6). In a clear inconsistency and contradiction He destroys the human race, except for Noah and his family; because "man thoughts were evil constantly" Gen (6:5) Than later promised never to do it again (Gen 9), that's some thing to be thankful for in our age of weapons of mass destruction. In another contradiction, after defeating and looting the Egyptians with ten plagues, sends the Hebrew, the choice race, to invade the "Promised Land" with orders to kill with genocide (Deut 20: 13-14), accompanied with supernatural signs and wonders following against superior forces, sparing only women and children. Because the pagan nations were too corrupted. All though the Old Testament the Hebrews sin in repeated cycles, then God sends war, famine, or pestilence to punish them (2 Sam 24:13, 15). The Original sin from Adam and Eve is passed from generation to generation. Is that fair to blame progeny for something they had no choosing in?

In defense of God I will use the prophets' words. God says His thoughts are higher than ours. "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1Cor 1:25). God is all knowing and all seeing, while man has a limited understanding like children to an elder, so we are expected to have child like faith in a very mysterious God. Some one who is infinite must be infallible, because He knows everything.

Human beings have existed on earth for about half a million years. Agriculture, the necessary basis of fixed settlements, is about only around twelve thousand years old. Civilization only dates back more than six thousand years or so (Giddens, 643) The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines civilization as a high level of culture and technological development. Civilization is what separates man from animal (or even prehistoric man). At this point in time man is in the image of God; before what ever happened in prehistory was not in God's image. There is no missing link to prove man evolved from something lower, so God is to be blamed for dissent of man. Creation is too complex to be just an accident; there must be intelligent design. In man's culture are languages, literature, art, music, sciences, laws, order, and institutions that felicitate culture like family, religion, schools, government, businesses, media, and etc. Mathew Arnold reasons, 'culture is the best of what is thought and said.' Created in the image of God man possesses the attributes of personality to think abstractly, to experience rich emotional life, and to live as a free moral agent... But it is not perfected, every civilization that has come into existence has collapsed;. From the Egyptians, to the Babylonians, to the Medo-Persia, to the Greeks, the Romans, in ancient history and the European empires in modern history. Which says some thing about human nature; is it original sin? Is this class warfare according to Karl Marx? In some of his attitudes, man is like God. But in his moral and spiritual weakness he is very unlike God. Base mentality or animal passions seem to creep in on civilization and total war erupts. This is the essence of man duality; civilized with barbaric (primitive) inclinations. Mankind's hardest battle is within themselves.

The modes of life and social institution characteristic of the modern world are radically different from those even the recent past,. During a period of only two or three centuries — a minute sliver of time in the context of human history — human social life has been wrenched away from types of social order in which people lived for thousands of years. Far more than any generation before us, we face an uncertain future. To be sure, conditions of life for previous,

and famines. But though we are largely immune from plagues and famine in the industrialized countries today, we must deal now with social forces we ourself have unleashed (Giddens, 644). These new technological advances have positive and negative effects depending on how they are used. Advances in transportation and communication have linked the globe into one community. New appliances have made life much easier than before. But new technologies have made the human race more effective killers as we make these new progresses. Defense spends in general more on the military budget; about 30% of G.N.P. (Some countries spend even more), than they do other institutions. Military alliances will make the next war born previously. Two major world wars and many minor local wars show man's inhumanity to ward his fellow species. The next world war can never be won, and should never be fought, because the lethality of the weapon would make the human race extinct. Wars in our history have systematically destroyed that civilization progress. Imagine a world without war or conflict, man would make geometric advances in every known field. How much freedom is too much freedom, in His permissive will? When will god intervene personally, before man destroys himself? Well, we have to read the last chapters of the prophases would also prove divine revelation!

Looking at the duality of man, a prison guard once told me, "even the worst criminal has virtues." Nothing epitomizes this dichotomization more than the fictional story of Jekyll and Hyde. Based on Robert Louis Stevens's 1888 novel, 'Jekyll and Hyde' concerns a scientist whose quest for an antidote to save his dying, drooling daddy leads him on an epic internal struggle, Jekyll brings life to his evil alter ego Hyde, and sets in motion a chain of deadly, though not entirely regrettable murders. The complex story cannot be dismissed as a simple rooting for good to triumph over evil, because killing Hyde means killing part of all of us. Hyde represents a vitality and lust for life that is equal to his desire to bring to death. And at least at first, Hyde murders of town's hypocrite elite cleanses London of its less visible evil. (Moore, John) So when God does evil or vise there is some higher or greater good to be accomplished in His sovereign will. But when man does evil, for that same higher good or what he think is best, he cannot control the outcome gods can, thus fails.

What does the image of God mean or imply? What are the social and political ramifications for man being in the image of God? God's image is so unique, so special, and so incomprehensible that we are prohibited from making graven images and speaking His explicit (YHWH) or implicit (Lord) name in vain. (Ex. 20 1-17). God's attributes (love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self-control, merciful and just Gal. 5:22-23) should be emulated, because He is so magnificent. Thus He is to be worshipped. Why even make grave images, when you can look in mirror to see a reflection of God's image? man should put a premium on the value human life. This means civil rights for minorities and females, prohibits abortions (murder), regulate stem cell research, stop the death penalty (except in cases of war), economic empowerment for the poor masses (especially in developing countries), provide universal higher education, foster more global cooperation, and equal protection under law for the international community. There should be a democratic process to realize man collective opinion in politics, because God collectively punishes man sins as group, so we must bring man's collective intelligence to bare. In the words of the prophet, "love your neighbor as yourself" and "love your enemies". May God mediate between men.

I Am Me

In all the world, there is no one else like me
 There are persons who have some parts like me, but no
 one adds up exactly like me
 Therefore, everything that comes out of me is
 authentically mine, because I alone choose it
 I own everything about me:
 My body, including everything it does;
 My mind, including all it's thoughts and ideas.
 My eyes, including the images of all they behold
 My feelings, whatever they may be: anger, joy, love, fear,
 frustration, disappointment, excitement.
 My mouth, including all the words that come out of it,
 polite, sweet, or rough, correct, or incorrect.
 My voice, loud, or soft.
 All my actions, whether they be to others or myself. I own
 my fantasies, my dreams, my hopes my fears.
 I own my triumphs, and successes and all my failures, and
 mistakes, because I own all of me, I can become intimately
 acquainted with me.
 By doing so, I can have me and be friendly with me.
 I can make it possible for all of me to work in my best
 interest.
 I know that there are other aspects about myself that
 puzzle me and other aspects I do not know, but as long as

The Beat wants to welcome a new poet/teacher in Steven Gomez to our Beat Without pages. The following work proves Steven is a skilled poet, who has plenty of knowledge and inspiration to share. We look forward to hearing more from him. Steven writes about everything from being him to the bars he looks through. And though his perspective may be tainted by those bars it still is a very wise perspective. He writes from isolation in the California Department of Corrections.

I am friendly and loving with myself, I can courageously
 and hopefully look for the solutions to the puzzles and for
 ways to find more about me.
 However I look and sound whatever I say and do and think
 and feel at a givin' moment in time is me.
 This is authentic and represents where I am at that
 moment in time.
 When I review later how I looked and sounded what I said
 and did and how I thought and felt, some part may turn
 out to be unfitting.
 I can discard that which is unfitting and keep that which
 proved fitting and invent something new for that which I
 discarded.
 I can think, see, hear, feel, say, and do.
 I have the tools to survive, to be close to others, to be
 productive and to make sense and order out of the world
 people and things outside of me.
 I OWN ME AND THEREFORE I CAN ENGINEER ME.
 I am me and I feel OK!!

*In all the world, there is no one else like me
 There are persons who have some parts like me,
 but no one adds up exactly like me*

The Bars I Look Through

The bars I look through everyday,
 Cold, hard steel painted grey.
 They keep me in a prison cell,
 The world goes by, I wish them well.

 The bars I look through every night,
 Surround me with an air of fright.
 I long to be where I can see,
 No bars to look through I am free.

 The bars I look through hold me hear,
 Away from loved ones I miss so dear.
 But if with patience, I'll abide,
 Someday I'll look through the other side.

 The bars I look through have no flaw,
 They have me here I broke the law.
 My debt to God is paid you see,
 Now I will pay to society.

 The bars I look through
 Taught me well, I've
 Learned my lesson time will tell.
 I'm not the man I used to be,
 Since Jesus Christ has set me free

Don't Quit

When people pull you down, as they often will.
 When the battle you're fighting is all uphill.
 When the funds are low and the debts are high
 When you're laughing, although you'd rather cry
 When you discover yourself slowing down a bit
 Stop and take a deep breath but don't you quit

 Although you've worked so hard just to get this far
 You must steady your pace, just to stay where you are.
 You'll need twice the effort to make your way
 Tomorrow won't come until you've conquered today
 And if you discover yourself slowing down a bit
 Stop and rest if you must, but don't you quit.

 Always do the best that you can possibly do
 Treasure true friends, who are far and few
 Never give up, whatever the burden you bear
 Just one more step might get you there
 Often the battle that is proceeding slow
 Will conclude abruptly, when dealt another blow

 Succeed in believing that you will not fail
 With diligence and determination your ship will sail
 When the weather is stormy and the waters are rough
 In the moments of peril, the strong get tough
 Whenever life presses you down a bit
 Stand up and shout, "I will not quit!"

To The Beat

First of all, let me tell you that your publication is off the hook! The approach being used is 100% on target. I'm not sure how many other organizations are out there like yours, but I was never exposed to one like it until now. Thank the Lord for people like yourselves.

I am currently fighting a life sentence in the small town of Woodland, California. I am a twenty-eight year old male and can relate to many of the topics and stories in The Beat. At one time, I was a youngster from a broken home filled with anger and rage. I've done almost all the stupid things a kid can do at least once.

I've been exposed to gangs – actually I'm missing my front (teeth) because of a forty bottle to the grill by gang members. My mother is a Sacramento County Probation Officer of over twenty years and educated me very well on the psychology of most gangsters. I'm only thankful that I never fell prey to a gang. You see, I don't really respect what they are all about. I can however relate to and understand all the reasons that our youth are at risk.

In and out, in and out – Juvenile Hall was my thing for a while. No major crimes, just fights and things that always kept me in the system. At about sixteen, I hit a program up in Nevada called "Rite Of Passage" (ROP). It saved my life. I was violent, angry, and my future didn't look bright. I went to ROP and came out a new kid. I'm sure if I would have went to YA, I would have come out new also, in a scary way.

That intervention in my life saved me. It's so important to reach these kids at a young age. The Beat gives an outlet to all these youth. You let them know they are important and let them educate each other. The Beat is the Napster of youth rehabilitation! More seriously, your approach is penetrating.

Kids can close up when they hear about God or even when approached by counselors. The Beat allows them to express and absorb knowledge from each other. As you know, kids won't change until they have been touched on the inside. They might say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah," but they don't mean it. From reading The Beat, they become their own teachers. From personal experience, I never changed until I wanted to.

Well, now you might say, "Fool, you didn't change, you're looking at life." For one thing, I didn't change one hundred percent. I did gain a better attitude, a desire to stay free and, to my discredit, a desire for money. I've been out of trouble for ten years now – well, at least eight, I'm not sure.

After deciding to change, I started working. I worked eight hours at a newspaper and then eight at a diesel tire shop. You know the theory that you can't get in trouble if you don't have time. I did real good for about five years until I got burnt out.

I decided to make money in an easier fashion – self-employment. Boy, I chose wrong. My thought was that I wasn't hurting anyone that didn't choose to hurt themselves. What a selfish excuse. Now

Mike, a first time contributor, comes our way from Monroe Detention Center in Woodland, California. As you'll read in the excerpt from his letter, Mike came across The Beat and was impressed by what it's all about. He's mainly about just doing his time and going home. He makes it very clear that he didn't go to jail to make friends, so he'll do his time independently. We hope more of you could follow suit. We thank Mike for his submission, and we hope to hear more from him in the near future.

I see the effects it can have on people. Now I see the effects it can have on other people. I've repented for my sins and found God through this mess, so I am thankful.

The bad part is I'm now indicted along with seventeen or so gang members for some shootings they did. It's all very confusing and would take too long to explain. So far, about six people have been released because of wrongful indictment, so that's a good thing.

I'm no gang member, not even Hispanic. It was pretty comical being drug into court along with seventeen other Mexican gangsters with my White ass on the end. It's the same old saying, "Guilty by association."

Don't get me wrong – I wasn't going to church and selling cookies. It's just tragic that our justice system is so flawed. It's too complicated to explain it all, but let's just say the DA isn't having a clear view of the situation, or is choosing not to. I just keep my faith strong and chalk this up to a lesson. A last step towards being a good citizen and a godly one. I've had plenty of time to think, and just like my first choice at twenty or so, I've made another one.

I want to help our youth and people in general. Guys come through here with drug problems or that are prejudiced. If I notice those things, I try to help them. I have a son who is half Black. I have friends of all races from Mexican to East Indian. I'm a people person and I think I've reached a few souls. At least I hope I have.

The saddest thing is the drugs. I hear guys every day beg on the phone to get out to their parole officers, moms, dads. Ten seconds later, they can't stop talking about that dope they want. Sad, very sad. I hope from my effort they get a different view. I tell them, "Look I'm an accused baller, not your mom or a priest." I explain my troubles and with some it seems to help. I battle with alcoholism and can relate on that level. I have also lost friends to drugs. I work with any angle I can to get through to them. Fortunately I've been exposed to drugs but strong enough to stay away.

In short, I'm hungry to do exactly what you people are doing. I hope to get the chance to help youth. For now, I'm down twenty-three hours, so I'm trying to get my GED and improve my English skills. Seeing your work has given me hope. Are there any sponsors of yours I can write to thank them and express my feelings towards the wonderful publication you people produce? If possible, I would love to support your organization in any way I can.

Thank you for your time. God bless.

Independence Today

Just some sucka, I am not!

To be your punk, that's not my spot.

Handle your own, I'll handle mine.

Cry on your own, doing your time.

On the street, women to meet

People to see, people to greet.

My true homies, all to the good

Still kickin' back, up in the 'hood.

No different than you, just smarter you see

I have the strength to let me be me.

You know it's crazy how all these lawmakers can't see that kids only join gangs out of weakness. They break them down and put them together in rough places, away from their families. Personally I think the system is the main problem and The Beat Within provides a second family to them, and in some cases their only family. Keep it up and God bless!

*I'm no poet, I just hear the sound
A thunderous pounding, The
Beat coming down.*

I'm No Poet

I'm no poet, I just hear the sound

A thunderous pounding, The Beat coming down.

The thought of hearts breaking, the falling of tears

Words from The Beat, filling their ears.

What do they think? What do they feel?

Do they chalk life up to another raw deal?

All these thoughts run through my mind

If we can save one, it's all worth the time.

The system is broken, their minds are too

That leaves the fixing to people like you!

Reading The Beat

Sitting reading The Beat

Influence a 20 year old Chicana like me
To tell my story and release the pain and sorrow of the
soul.

See it all started w/ puffin' the blunt then twistin' the
bowl!

The rush. The feeling. Damn it can seem so good.

The goose bumps you get that bring you to sweat.

Consumed by violence. Making it my M-O because I
thought I was hard

I should've known I was dancin' w/ the devil and playing
out his cards.

"The downest hyna in the hood"

That's what mah "homeboys" said about me

Smokin' with me and it was all good

Until I began to hit that straight glass pipe!

Alone in the streets. Smoking crack all night.

I've been through shootings,

stabblings and gangstas fighting head to head.

Feeling disowned by my family.

Being left for dead by those for whom this block and
color I represent

For that rag I've seen my raza shoot others for wearing
The wrong color.

Pop. Pop. Pop. Man, that vato's laying there lifelessly
dead.

I used to write The Beat when in Juvi and CYA too!

Graduated from a program. Doing what I had to do.

Still I went back to the hood and got stuck on that pipe.
Making confrontation when I seen a rival too close to my
face

Now I sit here fighting a case so not to go to the pen.

Four months in here with not even a kite

I lay on my bunk in 850 Bryant

Remembering and reminiscing on all the things I did.

And

Realize it was me who was slowly really dyin'.

My "Homies" are gone

Except for the ones who write only 'cause they too are in
jail.

But, I can't blame no one but myself for this hell!

I'm through, I'm going to leave it alone

Now I'm fighting for my life. I'm also sittin' and doing
time all alone

I don't care what you think. I'm a woman

I can hold on without the gang on my own

Headed towards righteousness in life

The light is no longer off

I can see now because I'm standing with God all alone
So you see.

The streets and drugs ain't worth a thing

All that time and money spent without being able to
move out that

Territorial box and breath...

There's no finer things in life that compare to being able
to hug and see my family!

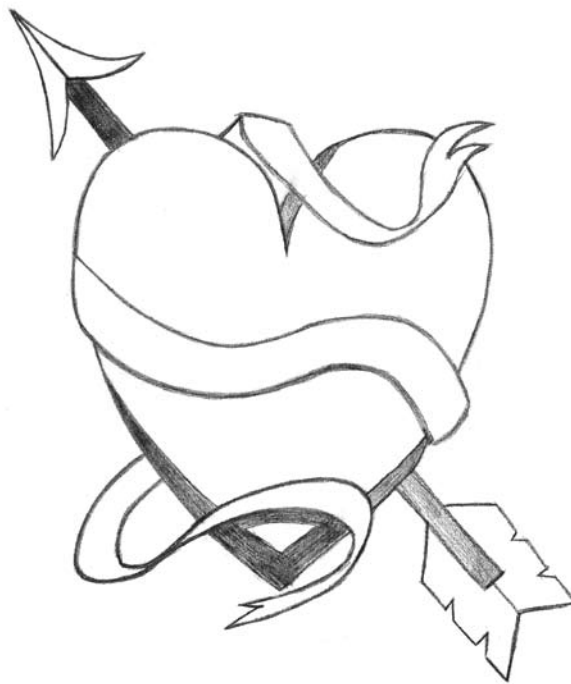
If you wanna keep destroying it, go ahead, its up to you

You'll be nothin' but another fallen home girl/boy.

Who after a while of tears memories they'll sure be
forgettin' you.

Although I can't speak for others but I do and will for
myself.

We know this young woman Guadalupe Padilla known as Giggles from both juvenile hall and the California Youth Authority, but now we're getting reacquainted with her while she's awaiting her fate because now she's in 850 Bryant (San Francisco County Jail). She sends two poems this week. The first is about what she gets from reading The Beat and then she also offers advice from her own experience. Then in her second poem, she speaks about what she has to go through while being "Behind Four Walls" again. And in the county there are people from all walks of life, so there are many different personalities you must deal with. We appreciate her compassion and insight. And hopefully we'll hear from her again soon.



Behind These Walls

Behind these four walls

Lies the story of each

Some Dope Dealers

Others drug fiends

The emotions that run

The anger and pain

Others upset when deputies disrespect

Some in their mind still hold the

Thought of revenge

The stories been told

Similarities run

Different tongue

Different day

Some same songs have been sung

Others left and come back

Very few make it the past

Tears have been shed

Smiles ran across the face.

Some keep to themselves others pass their time

By being in your face

Some mess with the wrong person

And weren't even braced!

But as time goes by

The stories don't change

Old people, new people behind these four walls

Lie the stories of the same

Very few seems to change.

Mothers Unconditional Love

a mother and grandmothers love,
 where does it all begin, with joy and happiness,
 when her eyes finally meet the child,
 god has placed in her arms,
 to protect and nourish it's way in life,
 watching as her child grows,
 the gentle smile on a face
 a gesture of love instead of a word
 or when a wound is found she hurries to comfort and aid
 the pain away
 reassuring it's ok
 teaching the simple things
 to walk and talk
 or eat by yourself,
 learning to say "please," "thank you," and "excuse me"
 or even "can i go"
 with lots of love and kisses
 for a job well done,
 as the years pass by another child sparkles
 with her unconditional love,
 all the other children gather
 to praise and admire the little one that has come
 working together to build the family
 that came from afar
 never did she imagine it would someday be a star
 of reality and joy,
 as the years have gone by we all gone our separate ways
 only to find that we need to go back and embrace our
 mothers' unconditional love,
 so proud of a mother or grandma
 or even a great grandmother
 as she sits back and sees her task of life has been
 fulfilled
 as she eases into her eternal life
 waiting our day at those pearly gates
 when reunited with our mothers love
 that has directed us to
 mothers unconditional love

We want to welcome this next first time writer to our precious pages. He is a skilled writer and poet who writes us from DVI (Deuel Vocational Institution) in Tracy, Ca. He's really into religion and God so many of you who believe will find his poems refreshing. He also writes about life and what it means for him to stay away from drugs. A great first time writer and we're sure he'll send us more once he sees this published.

Near By

it's cloudy outside as doom it's so near by,
 for the lost are scattered all over the world
 but if they would only be still and hear the cries of our
 lord
 the light would shine through like a twinkle in the sky
 near by, god has so much in store for us,
 if his people would only yield to his call,
 for he is coming for his bride who will be waiting
 in the still of the night
 be patient and learn the things of him
 for that day is very near when the trumpets shall sound
 as our savior arrives



Clean And Sober

Today I am clean and sober with many trails in my way
 withholding not my future
 not knowing what lies ahead

Today I am clean and sober
 With all the struggles, frustration and snares all along
 my way that I need to endure

Today I am clean and sober
 with sorrow at my side for all those who still are in
 bondage crying to be free.

Today I am clean and sober
 resting in my Lord.
 That's it is not a dream but a reality that He alone
 is carrying me and you.

Today I am clean and sober
 thankfully, that I've finally surrendered
 for today and all the tomorrows
 that I need to share with everyone so they can be
 blessed
 to be clean and sober, the Lord wants you to.

Snail Of Walls

i hope i'm not in bondage
 of these snails of walls and how can i get out
 well i'll tell you again how can i be set free
 through these snails of walls,
 he is the real thing trust him and love him
 with all your heart
 because he awaits for you to come to him
 with open arms
 to guide your path with peace love and understanding
 to rightness and kindness,
 he desires you to sing, clap, stomp and shout
 he, kings of kings
 lord of lords
 he can set you free within these snails of walls,
 and if god is for you who can be against you
 within these snails of walls
 no matter how much someone tries to put you down
 jesus will always be with you in these snails of walls,
 so i leave you with one thing, read your bible,
 god is your only hope within these snails of walls,
 god bless you all

What hurts the most was the fact that he was a good kid. He wasn't out there smoking, drinking, selling dope and everything else. He was at school with me, he was going to be someone and a fourteen-year-old boy took that from all of us.

read the rest of Anastasia Freeman's BWO piece on page 65

